THE RAPE OF INDIA

A biography of Robert Clive and a sexual history of the conquest of Hindustan

ALLEN EDWARDES

Author of THE JEWEL IN THE LOTUS
and THE CRADLE OF EROTICA

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

In THE RAPE OF INDIA, Allen Edwardes presents not only a unique portrayal of Lord Clive (the Great Nabob) but a detailed account of the social, economic, political, and sexual forces that destroyed the Mughal Empire and laid the foundation of British India. Drawing upon much new and virtually unknown material (**e.g.**, rare Hindustani journals and chronicles, revealing hitherto untranslated data), Edwardes unravels the tangled web of intrigue that facilitated the triumph of European merchant-adventurers over Indian dictators; that enabled the Honorable East India Company to drive French and Dutch influence out of Hindustan. A candid picture of eighteenth-century English morality is also painted, exposing the varnish of hypocrisy and corruption that stained this revolutionary Age of Reason.

To quote British psychologist G. Rattray Taylor: "Eros and Thanatos permeate every compartment of human activity, and a history which attempts to ignore this fact is not merely emasculated but unintelligible." No single work in existence embodies such an exhaustive amount of material to demonstrate the role that Sex, its subtle use and flagrant abuse, played in this momentous drama as can be found in THE RAPE OF INDIA. Western "mauvaise Honte" sought to conceal "unpleasant truths" which the Eastern mind found amusing if not remarkable. Among these truths was the gargantuan sexuality of Robert Clive, whose prolonged use of narcotics to sustain a shattered and wasted constitution comprises one of the most extraordinary case histories of drug addiction (and satyriasis) on record.

Penniless and unpopular, Robert Clive rose to be the richest and greatest individual in Europe. Self-made soldier and statesman, he established an empire which transformed England into ruler of the waves and workshop of the world.

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RAPE OF INDIA

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An Historical Survey of the Sexual Culture of the East

DEATH RIDES A CAMEL
A Biography of Sir Richard Burton

THE CRADLE OF EROTICA
(with R.E.L. Masters)

THE RAPE OF INDIA

A biography of Robert Clive and a sexual history of the conquest of Hindustan

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ALLEN EDWARDES

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Mark! where his carnage and his conquests cease
He makes a solitude, and calls it—peace!

Byron

Hast thou, tho' suckled at fair Freedom's Breast,
Exported Slavery to the conquer'd East?
Pull'd down the Tyrants India served with dread
And raised thyself, a greater, in their stead?
Gone thither, arm'd and hungry: return'd full,
Fed from the richest Veins of the Mogull:
A Despot big with Power obtain'd by Wealth,
And that obtain'd by Rapine and by Stealth?
With Asiatick Vices stored thy Mind,
But left their Virtues and thine own behind?
And, having truck'd thy Soul, brought home the Fee
To tempt the Poor to sell himself to thee?

Cowper

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PREFACE

Beginning as a penniless youth dismissed by his family as their black sheep, Robert Clive rose to be the richest and greatest individual in Europe. Self-made soldier and statesman, the empire he won for England made her ruler of the waves and workshop of the world. Through him a mere trading company became a political and military power.

The Chinese have held that the pendulum of history swings the male principle, yáng, and the female principle, yin, or in Hindu terms the *lingam* (phallus) and the *yóní* (vulva). This book supports that assumption. For the underlying and overlying forces of human sexuality in world events are undeniable determinants of history.

British psychologist G. Rattray Taylor (*Sex in History*) deems it "very strange and most lamentable" that historians have almost entirely avoided the study of erotic influences in human affairs, and have "maintained something like a conspiracy of silence about such facts as they do know." He adds that "suppression of the facts creates a wholly false impression of the period and makes many events quite mysterious. . . . The assumption of historians seems to be that sexual manners are something which exist in a watertight compartment, almost independently of historical trends as a whole, and that it would no more throw light on the general problem of interpreting history to open this compartment than it would to study the development of, say, cooking." Taylor concludes: "Even today, when we are supposedly so emancipated, our history books continue to be written with a determined disregard for facts which the historian considers to be unpleasant. . . . Yet the belief that sexual desires and habits are something that can be placed in an airtight compartment, and sealed off from history without affecting the development of the story, is no

longer tenable. Eros and Thanatos permeate every compartment of human activity, and a history which attempts to ignore this fact is not merely emasculated but unintelligible."

Edward Gibbon, for one, did not overlook sexual factors in the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, but his findings were restricted to Latin footnotes as a sop to *bourgeois* "respectability."

Sex, as a weapon, may be mightily wielded; and its use, or rather abuse, by Europeans and Indians to win and retain power is the subject of this book. It will surprise not a few to learn that the removal of an infidel foreskin helped alter the course of world history, and that sexual impotence decided in great measure the fate of French aspirations in the East, while a Briton's satyriasis influenced his earth-shaking activities, and that a Muslim's homosexuality determined his destiny. But Pascal recognized the fateful effect of psychophysiology when he wrote: "*Le nez de Cléopâtre: s'il eût été plus court, toute la face de la terre aurait changé.*" (Had Cleopatra's nose been a trifle shorter, the face of the world would have been altered.)

It has been said that "Men of great abilities are generally of a large and vigorous animal nature," and this is certainly descriptive of Robert Clive: an omnipotent phallic symbol in the Land of the Lingam.

The conquest of India was a realization of the English dream of a mercantile empire. Clive's aspirations and ambitions were at first personal: the search for an identity, the proving and placing of self in a sun that rose in the East. Cursed with disorders of mind and body, and victimized by circumstances of which he was prime mover, Clive found illusory peace of mind only in opium; and his agonizing struggle for dignity and security within himself never ended.

Like many a great liberator, Clive was damned directly or with faint praise by his autocratic contemporaries. There was philanthropic method in his imperialistic madness, for the bloody history of Hindustan had been a continuous reign of terror before that daring Englishman opened the womb of despair to a hopeful rebirth of civilization. Since the dawn of history, India has been overrun by alien invaders and pillaged by its own rebels. For centuries it had endured an Islamic incubus, the Mughal dynasty, an imperialism so barbaric and so hostile to Hindu philosophy that the British Raj was a blessing by comparison. The new invaders, after reforming themselves by way of example, restored law and order to a land which had experienced

no law save that of the sword and deceit; and a revived Hindu culture helped teach the people a democratic pride in being themselves.

Much new and virtually unknown material has been drawn upon for account. The Clive Papers (Powis & Orme MSS., etc.); India (Commonwealth Relations) Office, British Museum, and Bibliothèque Nationale archives; hundreds of published and unpublished memoirs, diaries, letters, official documents, and general volumes on the Age of Clive and the foundation of British India; hitherto untranslated documentation from rare Hindustani journals and histories, and such classic Clive biographies as those by Malcolm and Forrest have been employed in the preparation of this work.[1] To those institutions and individuals that furnished the materials of research, the author is indeed grateful. Particular thanks are due to Mírzá 'Abdul-'Azíz Khán of East Pakistan, whose Wilks Manuscript Collection contains (among other unique items) unexpurgated copies of several eighteenth-century Indian chronicles without which this book could never have been written.

[1] A selected and annotated bibliography of basic and original sources is included at the end.

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CONTENTS

1 * PEARL OF THE ORIENT * 3

2 * REBEL BOYHOOD * 6

3 * CLERK ROBERT CLIVE * 9

4 * THE CHALLENGE * 15

5 * CLIVE BECOMES CIRCUMCISED * 16

6 * SUICIDAL ATTEMPT * 21

7 * THE MUGHAL EMPIRE * 27

8 * THE FRENCH * 30

9 * TO PONDICHERRY * 39

10 * THE GARDEN OF EDEN * 45

11 * THE MAN OF ACTION * 51

12 * THE FORLORN HOPE * 58

13 * THE CITY OF PALACES * 61

14 * THE MAN OF DESTINY * 66

15 * THE TOUR DE FORCE * 76

16 * THE SIEGE * 82

17 * THE DEVIL'S BROTHER * 97

18 * THE DARING IN WAR * 99

19 * THE DREAM * 108

20 * MARRIAGE * 111

21 * THE CONQUERING HERO * 114

22 * THE PIRATES * 122

23 * THE BLACK HOLE * 128

24 * THE AVENGER * 144

25 * THE CAPTURE OF CHANDERNAGORE * 164

26 * PRELUDE TO PLASSEY * 175

27 * THE CONSPIRACY * 185

28 * ON THE EVE * 198

29 * THE BATTLE OF PLASSEY * 209

30 * THE AFTERMATH * 217

31 * THE SPOILS * 221

32 * THE HEAVEN-BORN GENERAL * 233

33 * FINIS THE FRENCH * 239

34 * THE GIFT * 249

35 * FINIS THE DUTCH * 255

36 * THE GREAT NABOB * 257

37 * HERO'S HOMECOMING * 262

38 * THE AUGEAN STABLE * 271

39 * THE HERCULEAN TASK * 279

40 * THE EMPIRE * 286

41 * THE WICKED LORD * 297

42 * CLIVE'S DEFENDERS * 304

43 * CLIVE THE SCAPEGOAT * 309

44 * ABSOLUTION * 325

45 * DEATH * 327

Bibliography * 335

Index * 339

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CAST OF PRINCIPAL ORIENTAL CHARACTERS

Ahmed Sháh, King of Afghanistan (1747–73) and Mughal Emperor (1748–54, 1757–59). Anglo-Indian orthography: *Ahmud Shaw.*

'Álemgír, Mughal Emperor (1754–57).

'Alíverdí Khán, Neváb of Bengal (1740–56). Anglo-Indian orthography: *Allyverdy Cawn.*

Ámíchand, merchant-financier and espionage agent for the British. Anglo-Indian orthography: *Omychund.*

Anveruddín Khán, Neváb (Governor) of the Carnatic or Coromandel Coast (1744–49).

Asef Jáh Nizámul-Mulk, Nizám (Governor General) of the Deccan or South India (died 1748).

Chandá Sáhib, Governor of Trichinopoly and nominal Neváb of the Carnatic (1749–52). Anglo-Indian orthography: *Chundah Saib.*

Ja'fer 'Alí Khán, uncle and commander-in-chief to Sirájuddawleh and Neváb of Bengal (1757–60, 1763–65). Anglo-Indian orthography: *Meer Jaffer Ally Cawn.*

Jagat Séth, Bengali financier and diplomat. Anglo-Indian orthography: *Juggut Seit.*

Khudáyár Letíf Khán, Sirájuddawleh's diplomatic adviser. Anglo-Indian orthography: *Coodayar Luteef Cawn.*

Mehfúz 'Alí Khán, legitimate son and general of Neváb Anveruddín. Anglo-Indian orthography: *Mahfooze Ally Cawn.*

Mírán Bég, son and adviser of Nevâb Ja'fer. Anglo-Indian orthography: *Meeraun.*

Muhammed 'Alí Khán, natural son of Nevâb Anveruddín, Governor of Trichinopoly and nominal Nevâb of the Carnatic (from 1752). Anglo-Indian orthography: *Mahomed Ally Cawn.*

Muhammed Sháh, Mughal Emperor (1719–48).

Muzaffer Jang, grandson of Nizám Asef Jáh and nominal Nizám of the Deccan (1749–50).

Nádir Sháh, King of Persia (1736–47).

Násir Jang, son of Nizám Asef Jáh and Nizám of the Deccan by usurpation (1748–50).

Qásim 'Alí Khán, brother of Nevâb Ja'fer, Governor of Rajmahal and Nevâb of Bengal (1760–63). Anglo-Indian orthography: *Meer Cossim Ally Cawn.*

Ráidulábh Rám, Grand Vizier to Sirájuddawleh and Ja'fer. Anglo-Indian orthography: *Roydoolob.*

Rizá Sáhib, natural son of Chandá Sáhib, nominal generalissimo and Nevâb of the Carnatic (1752–59). Anglo-Indian orthography: *Rezzah Saib.*

Selábat Jang, son of Nizám Asef Jáh and nominal Nizám of the Deccan (from 1750).

Sháh 'Álem, Mughal Emperor (from 1759).

Shujá'uddawleh Khán, Nevâb of Oudh and Grand Vizier to Sháh 'Álem.

Sirájuddawleh, grandson of Nevâb 'Alíverdí and Nevâb of Bengal (1756–57). Anglo-Indian orthography: *Sirajah-Dowlah.*

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* 1 *

PEARL OF THE ORIENT

India, Pearl of the Orient! *Hindustan*, land of fabulous wealth. Men listened enraptured to tales of the "Grand Mogul" and the "Taj Mahal," of marble palaces and sculptured temples embellished with precious stones and golden idols, of opulent maharajahs and luxurious harems.

To those who knew, it was a country of startling contrasts, of incredible extremes, sophisticated splendor and savage squalor, spiritual passion and carnal lust. To a cynical freethinker, India's cults included phallic worship, the sanctification of death, *thuggee* (ritual murder), *suttee* (widow-burning), and female infanticide and religious immolation, although carnivorous beasts, venomous reptiles, diseases and natural disasters were sufficient to ensure the balance of nature. Its deities fostered child marriages and child prostitution, holy whoredom and sacred sodomy, pimping priests and incestuous saints. Its temples were lavishly carved with divine and demonic figures in sexual postures both normal and perverse.

Yet Hinduism had made valuable contributions to science and philosophical Europeans were mystified. How could such enlightenment and superstition coexist? When Europe weltered in its Dark Ages, India was renowned for its culture. The advent of Islam had advanced Brahmanic progress in the arts and sciences. Jeláluddín Muhammed Akbar, greatest of Mughal emperors, was an agnostic intellectual who said: "My people are a strange mixture of Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. I am resolved to unite them all, politically and spiritually. I shall join the pantheism of the first to the circumcision of the second to the baptism of the third." [1] Though vested in-

[1] Alemí, Abúl-Fazl: *Áyín-i-Akberí.*

terests and human nature were against him, he (and two of his successors) achieved token harmony. Religious superstition held its own, yet the march of science was unopposed, and through trade and war it influenced Europe and stimulated its glorious age of enlightenment—and expansion.

Europe's gold rush to the East began with the Crusades and when the Mediterranean was lost to the Turks, Columbus and Vasco da Gama pioneered other routes. Portugal became the first Occidental plunderer of India. But Albuquerque's beginnings, an Indian empire, were overwhelmed by two rival challengers, the Dutch and the English.

European principles of international law, little enough observed in Europe itself, were not held to apply to "pagans," "barbarians," and "inferiors." Albuquerque conquered with the sword in one hand, the cross in the other. The Dutch were more practical. In place of the cross, they wielded a whip. Soon the English joined in. The rise of Puritanism in Elizabethan England fostered commerce by chartered companies of merchant-adventurers; for Puritanism extolled the virtues of industry and independence.

With the progressive displacement of feudalism by capitalism, economic power, through foreign and domestic commerce, was secured by the emerging middle class. The ambitious commoner was encouraged to find his place in the sun: a sun that rose in the East. This economic freedom and power accomplished the destruction of the Invincible (Spanish) Armada, and made Britannia Empress of the East and Queen of the Seas.

But the establishment, through mercantilism, of a self-sufficient middle class and the resultant growth of parliamentary politics threatened royal authority. In order to maintain sovereign prestige, the Crown sanctioned the chartering of trade monopolies, empowering them to protect their interests (which were also those of the Crown) by military force. Investing state capital in these private enterprises, "the powers that be" saved their status through those who threatened that status. Perpetuation of royal charters by bribes and loans and stockjobbing at Court was therefore customary and commonplace, although William and Mary's Bill of Rights (1689) outlawed such abuse of regal power without protective restraint of parliamentary

procedure. Five years later, the House of Commons ruled "that All ye Subjects of England have equal Right to trade to ye East Indies, or to any Part of ye World, unlesse prohibited by Act of Parliament." [2] Now it could truly be said that "Ye Trade to ye East Indies is free & open; it is become a Nationall Concern, a fine Field for Adventurers." [3]

In 1599, eighty London merchants had put their shrewd heads together and founded "Ye Governour & Companie of Marchant-Adventurers of London Trading to ye East Indies," which Good Queen Bess had chartered on the last day of 1600. Now, ninety-eight years later, a competitor appeared: the New (or English) Company, as opposed to the Old (or London) Company. This competitor was so effective that, in 1702, the two sister-monopolies merged to form "The United Company of Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies," the most powerful trade syndicate in the world, yielding 100 per cent profit. In 1750, its capital assets were valued at £3,200,000; and it had loaned the British Treasury an estimated £4,200,000, which helped finance the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–48). As the foremost banking-and-loan association in Europe, the stocks and bonds of the E.I.C. were then the safest investment for the gentry and tradesfolk. Having introduced two exotic beverages to the English people, the East India Company established two new institutions: the coffeehouse and the tea party. Sending about twenty ships a year to the Orient, with annual imports valued at £1,000,000 and dividends at statutory limit of 12½ per cent, it enriched England (and Europe) with Oriental luxury, making London "a modern Babylon" and "the clearing-house of the world."

The English came not as conquering colonizers, but as adventurous traders. However, Portuguese and Dutch opposition turned them into seasoned soldiers of fortune. It was seadog-eat-seadog, until Portuguese influence was driven out of India and the Dutch were reduced to harmless traffickers in isolated outposts. They left India for the Indonesian Archipelago, allowing the French to take their place.

"A Warr & Traffique are incompatible." So wrote Sir Thomas Roe, special ambassador at the Mughal court, to his London employers.

[2] *Journals of the House of Commons.*
[3] East India Company: *Court Minutes & Records.*

"Let this be received as a Rule, that if You will profit, seeke it at Sea & in quiet Trade; for withoute Controversy, it is an Error to affect Garrisons & Land Warrs in India." [4]

Conflict with the Portuguese and Dutch disposed of this rule. So, too, did depredations by Indian potentates and freebooters. The English had established their first factory at Surat, about 150 miles north of Bombay, by permission and patronage of the Emperor Jehángír (1608). Harassed by Malabar pirates and Maratha raiders, the President at Surat advised the Company Directors that "Ye Time now requires You to manage your generall Commerce with ye Sworde in your Hands." [5] Instructions were issued accordingly (1687) "to establishe such a Politick of Civill & Millitary Power, and create & secure such a large Revenew to secure both, . . . as may be ye Foundation of a large, well-grounded, secure English Domayne in India for a long Time to come." [6] These instructions became the E.I.C.'s guiding principle and code of conduct, further enforced by Sir Thomas Roe's change of mind after a bitter taste of Indian treachery: "Assure You, I knowe these People are best treated with ye Sworde in one Hand & Caduceus [symbol of medicine] in ye other." [7]

[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*

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REBEL BOYHOOD

It was a bleak December morning, in the Year of Grace 1742. The East India House in Leadenhall Street, London, was a cold gray edifice scarcely warmed by its several majestic fireplaces. "A dreary pile" (so Charles Lamb, after thirty-three years of clerking there, styled it) "with its labyrinthine passages and light-excluding, pent-up offices." [1] Cocked hat in hands, a young applicant stood at casual

[1] Davies, A. Mervyn: *Clive of Plassey.*

attention in the sepulchral committee room. Seated before him, at an ebony-and-gold conference table, were several elderly gentlemen with sour visages and somber vestments: a fair representation of the "Mercantile Tyrants," of the "Twenty-four Kings of Leadenhall Street," the Right Honourable Court of Directors of the Right Honourable British East India Company.

Having scrutinized the lad, a beetle-browed bigwig grunted to a gawking clerk, who asked: "Well, young gentleman, what is your name?"

"Robert Clive."

"Please to address me as 'Sir.' "

The lad scowled.

"What is your age, Mr. Clive?"

"Seventeen, *sir*."

"Father's name and profession?"

"Richard Clive, *sir*. Lawyer." [2] . . .

Richard Clive, Esq., Barrister-at-Law, Country squire and typical *bourgeois* lived in the self-sufficient tradition of his Puritan ancestors. A £500 annuity helped feed and clothe his growing family, and keep the Shropshire estate at Styche in repair, but did not allow him the financial independence which he craved. Richard's illustrious grandfather, Colonel Robert Clive, had won his spurs with Cromwell's "Ironsides" and later served in the Barebones Parliament. His martial spirit and administrative ability, as time was to prove, were reincarnated in the great-grandson, his namesake, who delighted in that old Royalist ditty:

> *From Wem and from Wyche,*
> *And from Clyve of ye Styche,*
> *Good Lord, deliver us!* [3]

Richard Clive tyrannized over his family. He sought authority, not affection, and gave his children no attention except punishment. To protect her firstborn from the father's volcanic temper, Rebecca Gaskell Clive had sent him to live with his Uncle Dan and Aunt Bay in bustling Manchester. Robert Clive was then two years old.

[2] Hickey, William: *Journal*.
[3] *Malcolm's Anecdotes*.

The childless Bayleys, Daniel and Elizabeth Gaskell, welcomed the frail but mischievous imp. "Bobby-boy" easily won their indulgent affection. They spared the rod and, as one of his schoolmasters shrewdly observed in later years, "The sparing of the rod altered the appearance of three empires." [4]

Aggressive and independent, the boy was shunted from one school to another in the vain hope that he might somewhere, somehow find someone who could control him.

Before the age of seven, Bobby-boy's terrible temper was the subject of solicitude on the part of the Bayleys. Daniel gravely informed his brother-in-law that "Little Bob is intollerable wild & Head-strong. He is up-in-arms at every Opportunity, and shews Wildness & a Desire to dominate. I do what I can to subdew this little Caesar, and try to incourage good Instincts in him." [5]

After a long and severe illness attended by high fevers and convulsions that nearly ended his life, the precocious child heartened the old couple with "his exceeding Patience" in place of "an eminent Degree of Crossness." But the very nature of his constitutional weakness, aggravated by a physical condition prevalent among the uncircumcised, soon restored his fiery temper.

The daredevils of his home town accepted Bobby Clive as their leader after he had scaled a lofty steeple. He led them in raids against storekeepers who refused to pay them tribute in apples and pence to ensure unbroken windows.[6] "Rogue Bob" then became "Robber Clive." Again Uncle Dan wrote: "I hope I have made a little further Conquest over Bob. . . . I am satisfyed that his Fighting, to which he is out-of-measure addicted, gives his Temper sich a Fierceness & Imperioseness that he flyes out upon every trifling Occasion. For this Reason I do what I can to suppress ye Heroick, that I may help forewards ye more valueable Qualities of Meekness, Benevolence & Patience." [7]

Suppress the heroic? Forlorn hope! Clive learned benevolence, but it was not in his nature to be meek. And patience? *Beware the fury of a patient man!*

[4] Gleig, Rev. G. R.: *Life of Clive.*
[5] *Clive Papers.*
[6] Malcolm, Sir John: *Life of Lord Clive.*
[7] *Clive Papers.*

At this point Mr. Richard Clive decided to put the extinguisher on his firebrand son. Despite the pleas of his tearful wife he pulled a few strings and sent Bobby-boy packing to India.

To father Richard, eldest son Robert was "that idiot" or "Idiot Bob." When people asked him how the lad was faring, he would answer cynically: "He's making progress—in evil." At their last meeting, the older Clive had said to the younger: "You're not only bad, but what's worse, you're stupid! I had hoped you would study law, make something useful of yourself, but it seems your piddling talents are bent to evil courses. Well, you precious rascal, there's no hope for it but I should send you off to make a worthwhile man of yourself or die of your evildoing." [8]

The boy left England alone, desolately alone, with no one to bid him *bon voyage* at the East India Dock. It was said that "Those whom God curses, He sends to Madras!" and that "In India, a European either perishes or becomes a millionaire!" One optimistic schoolmaster had predicted: "If that lad should live to be a man, and an opportunity be given for the exertion of his talents, few names will be greater than his." Another, however, had declared him "the most unlucky boy that ever entered this establishment." [9]

[8] *Malcolm's Anecdotes;* Harness, Wolf: *Clive.*
[9] Gleig; Malcolm.

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CLERK ROBERT CLIVE

"Have you ever served—I mean been in the army?—though I presume from your age and appearance you have not."

"No, sir."

"Can you go through the manual exercise?" This question caused the "arrant malapert" to grimace, so the quill-pusher advisedly rephrased it with a disdainful sniff: "I *mean* the manual of arms, with which all civil servants of the Company must be familiar in the event of war. *Well?*"

"No, sir."

"Then you must take care and learn it."

The frowning lad bowed stiffly.

"You know the terms upon which you enter our service?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you satisfied therewith?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. Please to step forward and place your signature on this covenant."[1]

He did so, though the choice was not his. He inscribed his name, boldly but indifferently. Thus, on December 15, 1742, the name of "Booby" Clive (bonded for £500) was scratched second on a list of eight Writers [clerks] for Fort St. George [Madras].[2]

A husky young Englishman gazed anxiously, shading his brown eyes from a blinding glare. The deep blue-green of Bengal Bay was paled by a veil of haze which hung over a cloudless horizon. Fifteen nerve-racking months at sea—and now, at long last, scudding into Madras Roads. *Coromandel Coast! India's spicy shores!* It was May 31, the Year of Grace 1744.

A ribbon of white-hot sand flared as far as his eyes could scan north and south. Thunderous surf ripped far up the gently sloping beach to the lush belt of coconut palms that marked the shoreline. A long, low, sun-baked row of crenelated and bastioned earthworks formed the defenses of Fort St. George, the British trading-post. Crowded within the walls he saw the gleaming white warehouses and countinghouses of the East India Company, the glowing pink bungalows and barracks of European civilians and soldiers, the squat drab huts and radiant shell-lime sanctuaries of the native quarter. The Union Jack, emblem of empire, flapped high overhead.

Coconut palms fringed the dusty roads of Fort St. George, crowded with creaking bullock carts and jabbering merchants. Clive passed warehouses jammed with trade goods and treasure, countinghouses swarming with buyers and sellers.

As in London, people had pointed enviously at the "bigwigged nabobs" of the E.I.C. Clive understood the catchword "nabob" (from the Hindustani *nevâb*, prince) as "one who makes a financial killing

[1] *Hickey Journal.*

[2] E.I.C.: *Records.*

in India." The E.I.C. occupied much of the territory around its three big trading towns—Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay—leasing the land from the Mughal emperor and his local governors. Company employees bought and sold goods as legitimate traders, not interlopers, and they kept up a small army of Europeans and *sepoys* (native troops) to protect their interests.

At the time of Clive's arrival, there was rivalry between English and French traders, connived in by Indian princes. The Dutch had bowed out. But armed conflict between the English and the French trading companies was, as yet, a mere threat.

Founded in 1641, the fortified factory at Madras, named St. George in honor of England's dragon-slaying patron saint, had become the headquarters of British commerce on the Coromandel Coast. The land on which it stood was leased, at the time of Clive's arrival, from the *Nevâb* or Mughal governor of the Carnatic region, whose *firmán* (imperial edict) allowed duty-free trade to the English for an annual tribute or rent-tax.

The chief factor of Fort St. George, Mr. William Hornby, was a stickler. "Mind how you cross him," Clive was warned. "He can be damnable ugly."

"*Hah!*" Clive replied. "So can I." [3]

Mr. Hornby did not appreciate the new cadet's unpowdered hair, unbuttoned waistcoat, and ungovernable looks.

"Are you so wrongheaded, sirrah, as not to dress properly? Do you not wear a peruke? If not, you must powder your hair and take care 'tis properly clubbed and tied; otherwise we must insist on your having it cropped for the use of a wig. And buttons were made to be buttoned. D'you understand?"

Clive knit his brow, eyes ablaze. "You be damned, sirrah!" He then smirked, "Now we *both* understand."

Hornby reddened, squeezing his swaggerstick, but dared not strike the malapert for fear he might have a patron among the "high-caste" merchants or councilors.

A brisk tour of Madras left Clive somewhat disappointed. Visions of Oriental splendor—of mosaic palaces and carved temples, bejeweled princes and spangled courtesans—faded before the spectacle

[3] *Voyage to the East Indies in 1747 & 1748.*

of the so-called Black Town, festering north of the European quarter, which was cut off from the fort proper by a bazaar. The stench of sweat, urine, and dung smoldered with the fumes of spices and garbage and rotting carcasses. Howling "ragheads" spilled through the cramped, writhing streets; and nude wenches, warbling lewd ballads from henna-stained lips, beckoned from windows and balconies.

He brushed past sacred cows, bumped into blind beggars, stumbled over mangy pariah-dogs. He saw naked Hindu holymen (wild-eyed scarecrows with long matted hair, their wraithy forms smeared with cowdung ashes) with heavy stones tied to their foreskins to keep down evil of the flesh. He saw infatuated Muslim women, veiled from head to toe, reverently kissing the erect phallus of a "saint," an act said to ensure fertility. A contemporary observer wrote of these pious frauds: "They trapse about, stript to ye Buff, spitting & pissing like ye Asses they are; and damme if these precious Fools of Gentoos [Hindus] don't run up & catch ye foul Stuff in their bare Hands!" [4] This was said to bring good luck and happiness. And so were the sight and act of some religious lunatic buggering a mule, or of some holyman on top of a sacred harlot.

"Damn my eyes!" Clive may have blurted when he saw what a great purifier was "sacred Cow-piss." The heathens caught it in their cupped hands, straight from the "Mother of the Gods," then sipped it and rubbed it over their heads. " 'Tis said to wipe out external & internal Impurities." [5] Indeed, a Brahman who defiled himself by piddling in his clothes had to purify the garments by washing them in cow's urine.

"One can only begin to imagine what a hold Superstition hath on these People: that they besmear ye Floors & Walls of their Houses with Cow-turds, and think ye place sanctify'd by such Pollution. 'Tis like living on a Dung-hill!" [6] And would one believe that belching and breaking wind were encouraged as indications of a good digestion? Or that the natives deemed it "fine clean manners" to blow their noses with their fingers, then wipe the filth on a wall, scorning handkerchiefs as a source of defilement? [7]

[4] Rae, Dr. John: *Journal.*
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] Dubois, Abbé J. A.: *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies.*

Abbé Dubois asks: "Is it the customs that are ridiculous, or is it the people who follow them?" To which one cannot answer, "The customs," for "What kind of people follow ridiculous customs?"

Instead of splendid palaces, Clive found squalid huts; instead of maharajahs, he saw human scarecrows with rags wrapped around their heads and loins. The Pariah females, notoriously promiscuous, excited his youthful senses with their wanton looks and wiggling saunter. All were stark-bare above the waist, and they thrust out their dark-brown breasts with "shameless Pride." The Muslim women were as promiscuous, but more modest about it. They ogled the Sahibs from the slit in their veils.

"When a Moorish Dame covers her Face," it was noted, "she need not fear uncovering her Bottom. One might lay her in ye Street, so long as she's Veil'd." [8] The alert also observed that the skin-tight pantaloons of doe-eyed, olive-skinned Brahman girls had "an Hole in these Tights [that] allows of poking in dark Corners," and that their silk handkerchiefs were used "to wipe their Quaynts of Spent." [9]

Our observer comments: "I should have a care about exposing myself in publick places!" Aye, but in India, "a standing Prickle hath no Conscience. . . . God-damme if ye lot of these Wantons are not riddled with ye Pox!" That they were, and rather proud of it; for "India is a Pest-hole, where two things are seen: Corpses being torn, and Wolves tearing them." [10] On the other hand there was little of the hypocrisy of "civilized" Europe, where sinning was done in secret.

A single afternoon in the Black Town had demonstrated Byron's lines that "What men call gallantry, and gods adult'ry, is much more common where the climate's sultry." Competition was keen between prostitutes and adulteresses; and fornication was so monopolized by well-paying Sahibs that unmoneyed Indian males had to resort to dirt-cheap sodomites for their sexual satisfaction. Child whoredom therefore increased, as much provoked by sex-starved male adults as by the nymphophilia and defloration mania then fashionable in Europe and the Orient.

"In good sooth, ye Madrass Wenches are reaping a rich Harvest! As fast as a Cadet arrives from Europe, he rushes off to ye Black

[8] *Rae Journal.*
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Ibid.*

Town; and one can see our Fellows waiting in line outside ye Knocking-shops, all but holding their Tools in their Hands, and shouting to those having Whores to look sharp." [11]

Mr. Robert Clive, 'prentice writer or clerk (junior grade of Covenanted Civil Servants of the Honourable East India Company), reported for work at the chief factor's countinghouse. He perched himself on a high wooden stool before a long and sloping wooden desk heaped with account books, bills of lading, inventory lists, and other documents. Paper rustled, pens scratched, fans swished, sweat poured and flies buzzed. . . .

Clive felt like a jailbird in the cage of a house of correction. And God damn that slave-driver, gawking over his shoulder like a ravenous vulture! Mr. Hornby reminded him of those detestable schoolmasters, birch rods raised and spectacles lowered menacingly, whose leers and sneers filled him not with fear but with loathing. . . . *Have patience, and endure.*

But for all that day—and the next, and the next—he sat in his shirt-sleeves, bathed with perspiration and plagued by flies, copying invoices. *Beware the fury of a patient man!*

The nights were nearly as hot as the days. Tormented by fleas and mosquitoes, the reek of stink bugs and the howling of jackals and pariah dogs, it was daybreak before he dozed off to awake worn out. Then, by day, there was "red-dog," prickly heat, an everlasting aggravation, and the precautions to shake out his shoes, where a scorpion might have nested, and mind where he walked, lest he tread on a snake.

The so-called Writers' Barracks were a range of apartments in an ancient, weather-scarred building infested by rats and cockroaches—despite the employment of sweepers and cats. It used to be called the Old College, for it had once served as a Muslim center of learning. Clerks called it the "Cranny Hole." "Cranny" (Hindustani *kiráni*) was the Anglo-Indian word for writer or clerk.

Clive was discouraged and miserable, but he could not leave. He dared not go back to England, there to hear his father's scornful laugh. If there was little here in India, there was even less for him at

[11] *Ibid.*

home. No, he must stay—to spite his father; he must live, to spite his father; and he must make a worthwhile man of himself, to spite his father!

Clive stuck to his desk as the others did, working for the day when they would be "free men," that is to say, junior merchants, to trade independently.

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THE CHALLENGE

Most Europeans came to India for only one reason: to reap a fortune, and return home to spend it. India offered that golden opportunity to the enterprising European. Hundreds gambled health and life itself for that chance. A poor or middle-class family sent its son (or sons) to the East as a Company clerk for that reason. Families that wanted to be rid of unruly sons took the same course.

When adventurers could, they exploited the natives. In dealing with Orientals, who were reckoned as lacking conscience or soul, to take the most and give the least became axiomatic. They held to the smug and convenient prejudice that Orientals were innately treacherous and depraved. This was countered by Oriental distrust and dislike of Occidentals, provoked by the villainy of early traders and travelers. And strangeness alone bred mistrust. Hence, the average European made no effort to identify with the natives. He lived a virtually segregated existence, communicating with Easterners only in material matters, smugly satisfied that there was little or nothing to learn from "barbarians" save variations of vice. Free-spirited as the Briton was, he was narrow-minded. His middle class had become an establishment, set in its self-sufficient ways.

Robert Clive proved an exception. He dared to involve himself with strange people in a strange land. This involvement enriched his intellect and helped him lay the foundation of empire. But to his father he wrote, like any other clerk, "I shall let no Opportunity slip

of improving myself in every thing where I can have the least View of Profitt." [1]

Clive dared not reveal the true state of his feelings, dared not tell his father how utterly miserable he was, for that would be admitting defeat and disgrace. He could not, however, conceal his anxiety: "My not hearing from You makes me very Uneasy." He needed money.

"If ye Company allow'd no Private Trade, their Servants must starve." So stated the merchants of Calcutta to their London employers.[2] And in Bengal even the lowliest writer could trade under the patronage of native *banyans* or merchant-financiers. But at Fort St. George, according to one observer, "Every Man's Fortune seems to depend on the Death, Ruin, or Removal of another." [3] Promotions were slow, and acquired only by influence; and trade was the monopoly of insiders: "Indeed," Clive wrote, "if we had nothing more to depend on but our Allowance, it would be to very little Purpose for us to spend our Time here." [4] It was everyone's ambition to reach *Bengal*, where fortune fell to those who would "shake the pagoda [goldpiece] tree" by trading independently and living by one's wits.

[1] *Clive Papers.*
[2] *Bengal (Fort William) MS. Records.*
[3] *Voyage to the East Indies.*
[4] *Clive Papers.*

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CLIVE BECOMES CIRCUMCISED

According to a bastard English version (1725) of Schurig's classic *Spermatologia*, "PHYMOSIS—From the *Greeke*, 'a muzzling,' " is

> *An abnormose condition, in which the* Orifice *of the* Prepuce *(or* Foreskin *of the* Penis*) is so tight or constricted, that it can not be retracted or drawn back to bare the* Glans *or* Corona*. As a rule, the condition is congenite; but it may also arise from inflammation, or from congestion, as is occasioned by mastupration frequently re-*

peated or violent, or by Sodomy, or by rough and violent coition, particularly when there is a disproportion between the Male Organe and the Vagina, in which considerable pressure is brought to bear upon the Penis, causing it to swell. As a rule, the swelling is oedematose, resembling in appearance water-blisters, and lasts only a few hours, or at most a day or two. When congenite, the inner surface of the Prepuce often is adherent to the tissue of the Corona, making it impossible to expose the Glans. Oftentimes the Orifice of the Prepuce is so small, being no larger than the head of a pin, that Urine is past with difficulty. Phymosis hath a tendency to limit the growth and developement of the Penis, and to cause irritation and inflammation of the parts, frequently resulting in excessive Onanism and unnatural Venereal practices, as well as other disorders. The operation of circumcision may be necessary in all cases where the gradual stretching of the Foreskin, continued several days, can not bring about retraction of the Prepuce; and all adhesions must be broke up, lest Satyriasis or Priapism result, in which self-abuse may be indulged in to an excessive extent, and Sodomy often is practiced, to the detriment of natural venery.

Dr. John Rae, civil surgeon at Fort St. George, was a canny Scot whose cynicism defined human nature as "plagued & impell'd by ye discommodious Itch to cast out ye offending Adam." [1]

By the doctor's diagnosis, Mr. Clive was phimosed; and he could not pass inspection in such a dubious condition. "Were it but mere Contraction of ye Orifice, unyielding to Dilation," Rae noted in his medical recordbook, "I should have done no more than slit ye Skin. But carefull Examination exposed an Adhesion ye like of which needs must be remedied by Circumcision, else ye Parts may mortify."

Mortify!

> *Subject protested that he had suffer'd* strictum Praeputium [*a tight skin*] *all these 8 & 10 Years, and that no evil Effects had come of it; but his extream Irritability, manifestly unconnected with a sensitive Nature, and ye uncommon Excitability of his* Membrum virile *to an indifferent Touch, betrays an Excess of Manustupration occasion'd only by an unnatural Condition productive of Prurience & Satyrism.*[2]

[1] *Rae Journal.*
[2] Rae, *Medical Recordbook.*

Elsewhere in his writings, Rae remarks that "In this unwholesome Clime, venereal Infection is rampant. Morbosity feeds off ye enervating Heat & Stagnation, making ye very Atmosphere peculiarly noxious to Human Tissue. Mortification of ye Prepuce, and even of ye privy Member itself, is endemick amongst ye Gentoos [Hindus], who do not circumcize, whilest it is nigh unknown amongst ye Moors [Muslims]." Rae goes on to explain that "Ye Foreskin of Blacks tends to be long & tight; and save it be loosed by Stretching, to strip ye Head compleat, Cleanliness is impossible & Putrefaction apt to set in. 'Tis surprizing ye amount of Corruption that collects under ye Prepuce, poisoning ye Skin betimes."[3] To be sure, cancer of the penis was prevalent among phimosed Hindus, yet rarely encountered among circumcised Muslims and those uncircumcised Indians not afflicted with phimosis.

Clive, "sullen of Looks," remained defiant. He demanded to know what "uncivilized Butcher" had introduced such an outrageous system of "authorized Mutilation," so alien to English sensibilities and so reminiscent of Dark Age barbarism. Rae explained that the Old or London Company (chartered by Good Queen Bess in 1600) had lost a considerable number of cadets from "Ulceration of ye Genitals," due to unclean habits and infection-causing phimosis. Hence, in 1661, the Governor and Council of Madras had enacted a provision whereby "all Cadettes shall be Bodily examined, as in ye Millitary Services, agaynst any irregular Condicion of ye Genitories as agaynst Symptomes of Venereall Disease."[4] If a cadet could not "strip his Yard" (fully retract his prepuce to expose the glans), or if retraction was painful by reason of adhesion, the surgeon was obliged to "clip ye Skin entire." The New or English Company (chartered in 1698) had not seen fit to abolish this provision, since it served its purpose: to safeguard the health and well-being of its servants.

Certain of the original "Marchant-Adventurers of ye Olde Companie" were willingly circumcised by the Grand Mughals, Jehángír and Sháh Jehán, as a sacrificial token of their faith and goodwill as "infidel" traders; and two of the senior merchants and councilors who

[3] *Rae Journal.*

[4] *Ibid.* (Extract, inserted by Rae, from *Provision for ye Bodily Examination of all Cadettes to ye Hon'ble Companie's Service: Fort St. George, A.D. 1661.* This document cannot be located in the E.I.C. records.)

had introduced the hygienic measure were themselves "mutilated." A noted gentleman to submit to this rite was the chief agent of the patron of Yale College, Elihu Yale, who became Governor of Fort St. George (1687–92) and a friend of Emperor 'Aurangzeyb. John Pitt, cousin of Captain Thomas Pitt (Madras governor, 1697–1709, and grandfather of the "Great Commoner") was deprepucized in his early twenties when dispatched as Yale's special envoy to the Mughal court at Delhi. In fact, all Yale's and Pitt's resident-emissaries were Islamized in the flesh, the better to diplomatize and bargain with the "King of the Circumcised." [5]

The first recorded example of such an expedient involves two musicians, Lancelot Canning and Robert Trully, who aspired to make their fortune by introducing English music to the Mughal court. One played the spinet, the other a cornet; but Emperor Jehángír was no music lover. "Thereat Canning & Trully decided to become Mahometans, which was kindly accepted by ye Kinge; so Canning & Trully were circumcized, and had a new Name given them, and greate Allowance from ye Kinge." [6] As agents of the newly established Surat factory, these two "apostates" served their own interests and those of the E.I.C. and Islamic India with enviable ingenuity.

Circumcision also proved diplomatically expedient in 1686, when war broke out in Bengal between Neváb Sháisteh Khán and the Company over the extortionate *jizyeh* (shearing) or "uncircumcision tax" imposed on all Infidels by Emperor 'Aurangzeyb. Sir Josiah Child, Director General of the E.I.C., dispatched two masterful negotiators to Delhi: Abraham Navarro, a Jewish interpreter, and George Weldon, a professional trouble shooter (himself circumcised). According to Weldon,

> *We were received at Courte with our Hands tyed by a Sashe before us; whereupon ye Greate Mogull withdrew us into a Privie Chamber, where he order'd an Eunuque to let downe our Breeches, that he might satisfye himself we were both of us Circumcyzed, and therefore fitting Spokesmen of an Uncircumcyzed Race, any Member of which who is thus mutillated must command especiall Attention & Respect by ye Moores, who regarde Uncircumcision as In-*

[5] *Ibid.; Voyage to the East Indies.*
[6] Hawkins, William: *Journal* (quoted in Purchas' *Pilgrimes*).

> *fidellish & uncleane, hence reprehensible, and despize & mistrust such as are not purifyed in ye Flesh. So satisfyed that we were thus sanctifyed, he order'd our Hands to be untyed, and treated us as Honourable Men.*[7]

The result was that the English were permitted, by imperial charter in 1690, to trade custom-free for a yearly tribute of only 30,000 rupees.

Rae advised Clive that "all Cadets who require it are circumcized, else they must give up ye Company's Service." [8] Though this may now seem a sacrificial hardship, it was to prove of great utility in time to come. Indeed it facilitated the transfer of Mughal power into British hands. As if anticipating this future advantage, rather than rationalizing a distressing necessity, Clive later declared: "I am proud of bearing the mark of an empire which we may one day rule ourselves." [9]

Dr. Rae entered in his journal (June 22, 1743):

> *Circumcized Mr. Rob't Clive, Writer, of a congenite Phymosis. . . . Clive is a queer, restless sort of Chap, who is really no good here; for he hates his Work & allways seems to think himself a Martyr. He is not a great Favourite amongst us, as he is often gloomy & discontented, tho' he hath his good Points. He is streight-foreward & Manly; and he put down 2 or 3 Fellows here, who had been given to bully ye young ones, in a way that astonisht 'em.*

As to the effect of Clive's phimosis upon his temperament there are the assumptions of John Rae, and the accusations of Charles Caraccioli (*Life of Lord Clive*)—satyriasis or an excessive sexual appetite was one of his afflictions. Any abnormal disposition of the genitalia is apt to provoke physical as well as psychological traumas. In the case of a tight prepuce, aggravated by adhesion, the psychophysiological effects could range from hypersensitivity and neurasthenia to compulsive masturbation and erotomania, and in extreme instances, manic-depressive insanity.

[7] Weldon, George: *Journal.*
[8] *Rae Journal.*
[9] Dalton, John: *Journal.*

Besides previous notices of amputating diseased foreskins, on August 13 Rae records a case of

> *Phymosis complicated by Balanitis [inflammation of the glans penis]: a Case like to that of R. C. [Robert Clive], as ye Subject [a wealthy young Portuguese nobleman, Dom João de Castro] is fitfull & morose, and by his own Admission, much given to Onanism. . . . Chuleel [Khelíl, Rae's Muslim assistant] tells me that Moorish Boys are addicted to violent Self-abuse till they be circumcized, whereupon they are temper'd to natural Venery: which seems a mere Progression to Manhood, for a circumcized Christian will indulge his Folly despite ye removal of its Cause.*[10]

"By God, had I but known I was come out here to be clipped, I'd have forsworn pork and procured me a skullcap!" [11]

Making such a remark might expose one to banter, but none dared accost Mr. Clive as *deglupta maena*—"skinned sprat"—a lewd Latinism with which most schoolboys were familiar. Ever since the Old Company had instituted medical examination of cadets, the so-called "Pill-cocks" (those who did not require "the knife," because they could easily "peel" or retract their foreskins) and the so-called "Clip-cocks" (Jewish lads and those who required "the knife," because of phimosis and/or adhesions) had traditionally baited each other. But when Clive was the target he put an end to it when (according to Rae) "he did menace ye offending Cadets with his Pen-knife, asking who should like to be First in ye Loss of his precious Skin."

[10] *Medical Recordbook.*
[11] Dalton (quoting Clive).

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SUICIDAL ATTEMPT

Months passed, and Clive remained agonizingly moody, flying into a fury at the slightest provocation. His sad face and tortured expression haunted the gay-hearted Edmund Maskelyne, his only friend.

Maskelyne enjoyed an adequate allowance from home, and most of the others resorted to native money lenders. Clive swallowed his pride and besought his father to help pull him out of the red, as he did not wish to deal with "black Money-mongers." He informed his sire of having been stricken

> *by a violent Feaver: so bad, that it was undetermined for some time whether Death or Life would be my Lot. . . . From the End of May to the Beginning of November have died here no less than 12 Persons, most of them Young Men, which has reduced our Number (which did not then exceed 50 at the furthest) very considerably; and the major part of the rest have been visited with very severe Feavers. These intemperate Climates demand a particular Care in the Preservation of our Constitutions, and I hope I shall still continue it as my opinion that Health is the greatest Blessing I can enjoy. [Thanks to] the Strength of my Constitution, I got the better of my Disease, and am now perfectly well recover'd.*

But for how long? Death roosted at Madras. "It seems that Fate must be reserving me for some Purpose." [1]

Clive then wrote to his Uncle Dan:

> *The Intemperance of the Climate, together with the excessive Heat of the Sun, is very obnoxious to our Health; and I really think the Advantages which accrew to us here are greatly over-ballanced by the Sacrifices we make of our Constitutions. I have not been unacquainted with the Fickleness of Fortune, and may safely say I have not enjoy'd one happy Day since I left my Native Country.*[2]

He was not only heartsick, but homesick—as he confessed to his favorite cousin, George Clive: "If the state I am now in will admit of any Happiness, it must be when I am writing to my Friends. Letters were surely first invented for the Comfort of such sollitary Wretches as myself." And his superiors, the factors and merchants! "They always speak in that infuriatingly Self-conceited, imperious Tone which I used to *Hate* in my Teachers. I find this Conviction of their own Importance, this canting Sanctimony, past all Endurance." [3]

[1] *Clive Papers.*
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*

"Myself I know that exiles feed on hope," said Aeschylus. But hope, like all else at Madras, was hard to come by.

One seething afternoon Mr. Clive kicked over the traces. The chief factor had tried his patience too far. "God damn you, sirrah, for a prig! If my penmanship doth not please Your Lordship's finicalness, Your Lordship is free to do the Goddamnable inkslinging yourself!" Clive slammed down his quill, lurched off his stool, struck out for the door.

"*I say!* You cannot leave, Mr. Clive!"

"Oh, can't I? *Hah!* Stand in my way, sirrah, and I'll box your ears!"

Mr. Clive marched back to his desk, as if nothing had happened, the following day. He was determined to turn over a new leaf, if only Mr. Hornby would leave him alone. Vain expectation!

"I have seen fit not to report your gross insubordination to the Council; but I do demand an apology, sir."

"Refused!"

"Now see here, Mr. Clive, I shall not be insulted with impunity. Perhaps you forget yourself, but you daren't forget my position. I'm not a mean man, sir, so I shall consider the matter settled with an apology."

"*Refused!*"

"Then I must take the matter up with the Council."

"Take and be damned!"

The taskmaster stalked out. Clive said to a fellow cadet: "God damn him! He can go hang. . . . In Cape Town, there was a Dutch pickpocket that kept baboons in a cage. The biggest and fattest fellow sat in the middle, and the others bowed down before him. When we threw food to 'em, the small ones brought the best morsels to the big one. The thanks they got was a box on the ear. Whenever I see Hornby, I'm reminded of that big baboon, stuffing his guts and knocking the little ones about." [4]

Governor Nicholas Morse, a fiery descendant of "Old Ironsides" Cromwell, thundered his judgment: "Demmed jackanapes! I *order* him to apologize."

Mr. Hornby buttonholed Mr. Clive outside the chapel that evening. "Sir," he said stiffly, "Governor Morse *commands* an apology."

[4] *Voyage to the East Indies;* Harness.

Clive scowled. "Very well, sirrah. Finding myself in agreeable humor, I apologize."

Clive was about to walk away, but the overseer caught his arm. "May I demonstrate my own good humor by asking you to dinner?"

Clive smirked. "No, sir, you may not. The Governor ordered me to apologize, not to dine with you." [5]

Revenge is sweet.

When the first Europeans penetrated Mother India, they were dazzled by its glowing sensuality, which soon kindled the moralized Christian to a white heat of pagan amorality. There were daughters of joy and dancing-girls who twined their pulsing limbs around a man, melting into his very flesh and soul. Subtle in the ways of love and lust, they practiced a timeless and universal art: to tantalize, to magnetize, to spring the grasping trap and suck the vital sap.

Officers and civilians of the Right Honourable British East India Company spent their otherwise lonely evenings in the embraces of these sirens. In the temples they tossed coins to the priestly pimps and fell between the expert thighs of the mistresses of the gods.

Clive, too, wallowed in this slough of rapture. As soon as he was able to set his manhood astir without discomfort, he abandoned himself to nightly rounds of pleasure.

The Romans held that after coition all creatures are sad (*Post coitum omnia triste*). Dissipation was no laughing matter, nor was it an answer to his unhappiness. After coition, Clive saddened. The recurrent irritation became a gnawing discontent in his unsettled mind, and he sank into an abyss of despair on whose brink sanity teetered.

Excess led to folly, and its tempering consequence, as when

> *Messrs. Clive & Walsh were discover'd in ye Harem of Ben Buttootah [Ibn Betúteh, Governor Morse's Indian secretary], stript to ye Buff & madly shagging all ye Cock-catchers [sex-starved concubines]; whereaft 'tis said ye Eunuques handed them over to ye Stable-boys, &c., amongst 'em a big Neger Slave, who bugger'd & abused ye Infidell Intruders most viciously: to such degree that their offending Pintles & Fundaments must be exceeding Sore.*

[5] *Voyage to the East Indies;* Malcolm; Gleig; *et al.*

Rae adds, characteristically: "Fortunate were they (if ye Story be true!) not to have suffer'd Castration, ye accepted Penalty for such monstrous Conduct, and only Buttootah's Connexions with ye Governour & Co. saved ye two Rascalls from a Fate befitting those of violent Appetites & possess'd of unruly & disobedient Members." [6]

Alone in his "Cranny Hole" cell, Robert Clive sat on the edge of his cot and brooded. He was drugged with self-pity—and opium, for he had begun to take opium pills, but not only as an antidote to the "malarious miasma" of Madras. He staggered over to the writing-table, and jerked open the top drawer. The pistol lay there, loaded and primed. Clive picked it up, cocked it, pressed its muzzle against the side of his head, then pulled the trigger.

Snap! He shuddered, wild-eyed with icy shock. Again he snatched back the lock, again raised the weapon to his head, again yanked the trigger.

Snap!

Then the door flew open, and in breezed "Mun" Maskelyne. Clive's head cleared at once.

Clive thrust the pistol at his roommate. "Here! Take this, and fire it out the window."

Maskelyne aimed it out the window. There was a flash, a crack, a burst of smoke; and the ball meant for Clive's brain drilled up a spray of sand on the glaring beach.

Clive gave a shout of laughter. "Well, by God, it seems that fate must have something great in store for me!"

"How so?"

"Twice I put that damned pistol to my own head, and twice it failed to go off. Goddamme, I must be reserved for something or other!" [7]

That was the crisis. The nineteen-year-old youth had imagined himself in a trap: shame awaiting him at home, despair facing him in India. But that illusionary trap was devised by his own self-pity and his own perverse pride. His father wanted him to die, he thought. He was now determined to live, just to spite the old devil. Clive was

[6] *Rae Journal.*

[7] *Maskelyne Papers; Voyage to the East Indies;* Gleig; *et al.*

scornful of death, for death had scorned him. Life suddenly seemed hopeful, a rich challenge to his vaulting ambition.

Dr. Rae jotted in his journal: "Mr. Clive will never make a good Servant of ye Co.; for he so hates his Work, that having been out here about a Year, he try'd to blow out his Brains. He snapt ye Pistole twice at his Head, but it did not go off: tho' it was loaden all right! Strange, indeed. So he is come to ye Conclusion that he was not meant to kill himself, and goes on living till some thing should turn up."

Critical contemporaries tell us "His Aspect was gloomy, sullen, and forbidding; his Temper morose and intractable. . . . His Person was the largest of the middle Size, his Countenance inclined to Sadness, and the Heaviness of his Brow imparted an unpleasing Expression to his Features." [8]

But now, instead of spending all his free hours in the whorehouses of Madras, Clive passed his evenings in the large library of Governor Morse, which was open night and day for the edification of Company employees. He pored over the monumental *Grammatica Indostana* and *Lexicon Persica*, polishing up his rough knowledge of the vernacular. A yearly bonus of £20 was awarded for mastery of Hindustani, £10 extra for fluency in Persian. Thus a twofold interest, practical and intellectual, inspired Clive to study both. He also read Plutarch and Livy, Cicero and Pliny, the poets Horace, Catullus, Ovid and Juvenal, and other classics, including the French. "Bob became so good a Latine Scholar," Maskelyne was to write, "that I remember to have heard him translate an Ode of Horace into very proper English Extempore." [9] Montaigne's remark that "*Le continuel ouvrage de votre vie, c'est bâtir la mort*" (The endless work of life is to build the house of death), and Pascal's observation that "*Le nez de Cléopâtre: s'il eût été plus court, toute la face de la terre aurait changé*" (Had Cleopatra's nose been shorter, the whole face of the world would have been altered) especially intrigued him.[10]

In a waggish spirit, Clive Englished Martial's best-known epigram in the satirical tradition of Tom Brown, then sent it to the "skinflint leech" who had "mutilated" him:

[8] Caraccioli, Charles: *Life of Lord Clive.*
[9] *Maskelyne Papers.*
[10] *Ibid.*

I do not love thee, Dr. Rae:
The reason why I can not say;
But this alone I can betray:
I do not love thee, Dr. Rae.[11]

[11] *Rae Journal* (insert).

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THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

For a century now the British flag had flown over Madras; superstitious Hindus revered the great enterprise and ascribed to it supernatural powers. The first copper coins minted by the English in India were stamped with an irradiated lingam, sacred symbol of the ever-erect penis of Lord Shiva. Thus the British East India Company was personified under the omnipotent title *Kampení Jehán Behádur*, "Brave Company of the World," and *Kampení Jehán* (or *Ján Kampení*) became occidentally reincarnated as "John Company" (*Jan Kompanie* in Dutch and *Jean Compagnie* in French slang).

John Company was neither conqueror nor colonist. To all appearances, trade was its strictly honorable intention. But competition and intrigue were making a political power grab imperative to commercial survival. In 1664, Jean-Baptiste Colbert—statesman, financier, mercantilist, father of the French Navy, patron of arts and sciences under *Le Grand Roi Soleil* (Louis XIV)—founded *La Compagnie Française des Indes Orientales* (French East India Company), which had established (1674) a large and lucrative settlement at Pondicherry, about ninety miles down the coast from Madras. The old saying, "Have the French for friends but not for neighbors," soon manifested itself in unfriendly rivalry. This threat to John Company's well-being was aggravated by French pirates who seized many an English merchant ship on the high seas.

The Grand Mughal, self-styled Emperor of India, was another menace. He tried to pit the "uncircumcised dogs" against each other.

And there were also the local dictators, His Imperial Excellency's satraps, who maneuvered against one another as treacherously as they did against the infidel intruders.

The rape of India, jeweled siren of the East, had drawn conquerors since the dawn of civilization, among them Alexander, Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. In 1526 came the Turkestani conqueror Záhiruddín Muhammed Baber (The Lion), who founded the Mughal dynasty that would thrive for over three centuries.

The Mughal Empire reached its zenith, memorialized by the Taj Mahal, during the reign of Khurrem Sháh Jehán (1627–58). Akbar the Great, patron of arts and sciences, had energized a cultural renaissance that was sustained by his son (Jehángír) and grandson (Sháh Jehán). But Akbar's great-grandson, Muhíyuddín Muhammed 'Aurangzeyb, was a mean-spirited fanatic who attempted forcible Islamization of all India, tearing down in a few years what had taken his predecessors over a century to build: Hindu-Muslim unity and harmony.

With 'Aurangzeyb's death in 1707, the Mughal dynasty began to disintegrate. By his proselytization mania he had stirred up a hornet's nest of Hindu nationalism—the so-called *Bhaktí* (Devotion) Movement, whose slogan was "Hindu Rule and Religion!"—that found formidable expression through the leadership of Shivají, chief of the warrior Marathas. The Sikhs, Jats, and Rajputs (equally warlike) soon joined the rebellion. Weakened by them, Mughal military power was finally broken in 1739 when the Shah of Persia invaded India and seized Delhi. Sacking the capital, Nádir Sháh (Tehmásp Qúlí Khán) carried off the solid gold, gem-encrusted "Peacock Throne" made for Sháh Jehán, containing the fabled *Kóh-i-Núr* (Mountain of Light) diamond then valued at more than £10,000,000. The Grand Mughal, Muhammed Sháh Ghází, was reduced to Nádir's puppet.

Warren Hastings, Clive's successor in India, wrote that "The whole History of Asia is nothing more than Precedents to prove the invariable Exercise of arbitrary Power." [1] Indeed, the active principle of Oriental government was "Absolutism tempered by Assassination," and this was demonstrated in India. Lacking strong central control, the vast empire slowly came apart in a welter of local dictatorships,

[1] *Hastings Papers.*

each plotting against the other for the imperial prize, and owing only a religious or racial allegiance to the figurehead at Delhi. Revenues due to the nominal supreme authority were whittled down to token tributes. Bloody bids for the imperial throne were offset by sanguinary struggles for provincial power, involving a host of adventurers and pretenders. Family feuds erupted into civil wars aided and abetted by Europeans, who acted upon the dictum of *Divide et impera* (Divide and conquer). Akbar's dream of a united India had become a nightmare.

The nature of that nightmare may be imagined by the following genealogy of the Mughal Empire from 'Aurangzeyb's death (1707) to the accession of Muhammed Sháh (1719); Behádur Sháh was assassinated and succeeded by Jehándár Sháh (1712), who was assassinated and succeeded by Ferrukhsiyer (1713), who was assassinated and succeeded by Neykúsiyer (1719), who was assassinated and succeeded by Ráfí'uddawleh (1719), who was assassinated and succeeded by Muhammed Ibráhím (1719), who was assassinated and succeeded by Muhammed Sháh. Having eliminated all family rivals, the latter was able to hold sway for twenty years; at which time his rebellious sons and satraps invited Nádir Sháh to seize the throne on condition that he would exact no tribute from his secret supporters. With three empires (Persia, Afghanistan, and India) to administer, Nádir deemed it expedient to retain the old figurehead.

This crucial and chaotic period in Indian history, marking the political decline of Islam, was exploited by the French and English. With dozens of deposed princes, adventurer-pretenders, and would-be usurpers to choose from, the Europeans did not want for pawns and cat's-paws. Besides, there was much to recommend the rise of Christian enterprise to the downtrodden Hindu. To him, *mughal* was metaphoric for "beast." Unlike those predators from the north, the *tópíválé* (hat-wearers) from across the Black Waters did not overtax and oppress, enslave women and children, or forcibly proselytize. The Europeans imprisoned debtors, certainly; but they did not torture or mutilate them. "The persecuting and intollerable Spirit of Mohametanism," as Hastings styled it, seemed scornful of Christian charity and Brahmanic humanitarianism. "It will, no doubt, be most happy for the Inhabitants of Asia when the despotick Institutes of Genghis Khan or Tamerlane shall give place to the liberal Spirit of a British

Legislature." This Hastings regarded as "an Event so beneficial to the great Interests of Mankind." [2] The Hindus, if they could not enjoy *svaráj* or self-government, thought likewise. The lesser of two evils was much to be desired. Perhaps national character and political independence could be restored by backing the Europeans against the Mughals.

While the Brahman dreamed of *svaráj* and religious freedom, the "untouchable" looked to the European as a kind of super-Brahman to rescue him from his own caste superiors as well as from Muslim oppression. Christianity, like the revolutionary *Bhaktí* Movement, taught that all men were equal in the eyes of God; that all men were entitled to individual dignity and self-fulfillment. The outcaste might hope to escape his lot by conversion to the European religion.

Since Muslim anarchy had enabled the European to insinuate himself into the ramshackle political structure of India, there to apply the "divide-and-conquer" technique, it needed only the active-passive support of the Hindu majority to turn the trick. The English and French therefore wooed the Hindu merchant classes away from their Muslim masters. The tradesmen, in turn, enlisted the agriculturalists and craftsmen, who influenced the landlords in their favor. And the warriors, defending Shivají's vision, did their decisive share. Thus was the dissolution of the Mughal Empire completed.

[2] *Ibid.*

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THE FRENCH

The French were first to exploit and accelerate the decline of the Mughal dynasty. Until the advent of Clive, the English lacked the curiosity and imagination that sparked France's imperialistic ventures in the East. John Bull's smugness and sense of superiority would not allow him to deal so intimately with Mother India. England wanted commerce, not intercourse, and with enough problems at

home she avoided burdens abroad. This hands-off policy was a natural manifestation of her new-found parliamentarianism, which, as the political extension of *laissez faire,* favored frugal noninterference. France, still an absolute monarchy, justified expansionism and colonization "by right of conquest" and soon libertarian England would be forced on the same path for the sake of economic survival.

Clive had heard much about the Governor General of Pondicherry, Joseph-François Dupleix, none of it flattering. Marquis Dupleix was a little old rascal whose ruling ambition was to kick John Company into the sea. His watchwords were those of Peter the Great, who died in the year of Clive's birth: "Do not forget that trade with India means world trade, and that whoever exclusively controls it is master of Europe."

The restless and ambitious son of a tobacco trader, Dupleix had come to India to seek his fortune as a penniless clerk; and like the melancholy Englishman who was predestined his Nemesis, he too had written home in an hour of despair: "I feel really miserable! To think that I am six thousand miles away from France; that I am without hope and consolation . . . !" [1] But since that time he had apparently found his way in the world; for now, in the late summer of his life, Joseph-François Dupleix held India in the palm of his hand. Having aggrandized the little French settlement at Chandernagore into the "Paris of Bengal," in 1742 he was appointed Director General of the French East Indies and Governor of Pondicherry, their magnificent capital. A student of history, Dupleix liked to compare the British East India Company with that rich and powerful commercial republic of antiquity: Carthage. And as Cato had said "*Delenda est Carthago*" (Carthage must be destroyed), so Dupleix made it his dictum that John Company must die.

The powers behind the French throne were, in succession, Mesdames Pompadour and Du Barry, whose petticoat government increased England's contempt for the "effeminate" French. But what seemed to be working in France was working even better in the Orient, for Marquis Dupleix exemplified the old cliché that behind every successful man is a (conniving) woman.

Dupleix' remarkable wife was the most famous and mystifying

[1] Martineau, Alfred: *Dupleix et l'Inde française.*

female in India. Jeanne de Castro Albert, the beautiful daughter of a French merchant and a Portuguese noblewoman, had inherited Indian genes from a pariah grandmother. Married, at the age of twelve, to a middle-aged trader named Saint-Vincens, she bore him eleven children. As fate willed it, Saint-Vincens was Dupleix' patron and closest friend. When he died of a fever, his widow wedded the up-and-coming protégé. Dupleix worshiped this lovely woman who dazzled by her vitality and her resourcefulness. Witty and subtle, Madame Dupleix was also an accomplished linguist. She was utterly without scruple and was said to have prostituted her own daughters when it furthered her husband's career as master of Hindustan—with herself as empress.

Madame Dupleix' ambition was boundless—but always with her figurehead husband as the front in deference to masculine prejudice. To the French, Marquis Dupleix was merely *"le vieil homme de Pondichéry"* (the Old Man of Pondicherry). They were more in awe of Jeanne. The natives publicly called her *Ján Bégam* or "Princess Jeanne," but in secret *Churayl*, the "She-Devil." [2]

When Louis XV took up the sword against George II in the War of the Austrian Succession, Prime Minister Henry Pelham's government loaned the E.I.C. a squadron of warships with instructions to blow M. Dupleix and Pondicherry to kingdom come. This unprecedented move was prompted by accurate intelligence that *M. le Gouverneur* planned to launch a privateer fleet against Madras, from Mauritius (Île de France), despite the fact that trade companies were pledged to neutralism, and despite the fact that *Compagnie* directors in Paris had forbidden Dupleix to engage in hostilities against the English except in self-defense. When in July 1745, he learned of England's countermove, he begged for mercy, crying *Compagnie* neutrality; but Mr. Morse, Governor of Madras, turned a deaf ear to his play for time. The British men-o'-war set sail as planned, plundering French merchantmen on the way. Caught with his *culotte* down, the Marquis appealed to the Nevâb or Muslim viceroy of the Carnatic region, by whose grace the "European curs" were squatting on Indian soil. The Nevâb, working hand-in-glove with the bribing

[2] Gaebele, Yvonne: *Vie de Johanna Begum; Lettres édifiantes et curieuses;* Pillâi, Pandit Anandaranga: *Brittánt;* Hámid, Ráví Tevallá: *Tevárikh.*

Marquis and his Madame, issued an edict forbidding his alien tenants to spill blood in his domain—under penalty of imperial disfavor. Wishing neither an open rupture with the Grand Mughal nor with the Nevâb, John Company called back its flotilla and sat on its hands.

With Jeanne subtly smiling by his side, the eloquent *Gouverneur Général* now proclaimed to the disquieted people of Pondicherry: "*J'ai fait la paix parce que j'ai besoin du temps à faire la guerre. Vive la guerre!*" (I have made peace because I need time to make war. Long live the war!) [3]

July, 1746. A wild-eyed sailor of fortune, Admiral Bertrand-François Mahé, Comte de La Bourdonnais, ran his fleet of warships up the Bay of Bengal. As governor of the Mascarene Islands, France's naval arsenal in the East, this privateering adventurer was the parent of Dupleix' designs on Madras. His official orders were to oppose hostilities, not start them; but La Bourdonnais, like his employer, was armed with excuses. He chased off the English squadron to the Indian Ocean, picked up a colonial army at Pondicherry, then fetched north-northeastward with the blessings of Marquis and Madame Dupleix—and of Nevâb Anveruddín Khán Behádur, the "Old Man of Arcot [capital of the Carnatic]." Made moral by jealousy Dupleix referred to La Bourdonnais as a "freebooting upstart," "that Breton cur," or "that villainous bugger" (*ce vilain bougre*). He complained that "M. de La Bourdonnais does not regard himself as my subordinate, acts independently without first consulting me, and holds himself in complete control of all military operations." [4] But he bore with it at Jeanne's advice, since La Bourdonnais was his only immediate hope of ousting the English.

Sunrise, September 14. Company employees were roused, as usual, by the roar of the morning gun atop a bastion of Fort St. George. But there would be no usual work this fateful day, nor for many days to come.

Pariah fishermen raced into town with electrifying news. A French fleet, anchored a half-mile offshore, was landing boatloads of infantry and artillery a short distance down the coast.

[3] *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses.*
[4] Martineau; *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses.*

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Fort St. George was manned by two hundred mercenaries, scum of European grogshops and "birdcages." A hundred armed civilians filled out the garrison. Their commander, Captain Peter Eckman, is described by a contemporary observer as "an ignorant, superannuated Swede." [5] In two days, Admiral La Bourdonnais disembarked a thousand French regulars and seven hundred Indian-African sepoys. He then summoned Madras to surrender.

"Dupleix be demmed!" Governor Morse replied, and dispatched an appeal to the Carnatic Nevâb. But the Hon'ble E.I.C. did not angle with a silver hook, did not tickle Anveruddín's itchy palm, so the Nevâb shut his eyes to the dirty work of Dupleix Sáhib—or, as he was now called contemptuously, "Messire Duplicity." Mr. Morse recalled that passage in the *Book of Common Prayer:* "Put not your trust in princes, . . . for there is no help in them." When he and his council (in deliberated desperation) attempted to buy off La Bourdonnais, this was the gallant reply: "Gentlemen, I do not sell honor. The flag of my king shall fly over Madras, or I will die at the foot of the walls." [6] There was no hope for it but to fight, and pray for the speedy return of their scattered squadron.

For three days and three nights, Clive and the others took their stand on the crumbling ramparts. Ten siege guns and five mortars pounded the walls on the south and west sides, while a thunderous bombardment erupted from seven warships ranged along the roadstead. Hailstorms of musketballs lashed the fort, pitting and pockmarking where heavy shot did not gouge and gash. The defenders were showered with cutting grit; and the rolling, raking fire allowed them little time to level their flintlocks or snatch some sleep.

Fort St. George mounted two hundred pieces of ordnance, but lacked the men and ammunition to serve them. "Yet [noted one of the besieged] we had more to dread from our own Disorder within, and Want of Government & Council, than from the Enemy without." [7] When the crippled garrison ran out of ammunition, Governor Morse ran up the white flag. It was September 21.

"Damnation!" Clive blazed. " 'Tis better to die than acknowledge such ignominious defeat. *Bah!* I expect those lousy, whoreson pol-

[5] *Voyage to the East Indies.*
[6] La Bourdonnais, Comte de: *Mémoires.*
[7] *Voyage to the East Indies.*

troons of merchants bribed the Council to cry quits, just to save aught of their filthy lucre. Curs, dunghill cocks, the lot of 'em!" [8]

The defenders of John Company watched Governor Morse throw open the gates "with bated breath and whispering humbleness," watched Comte de La Bourdonnais parade his troops with flying colors through the streets of Madras, watched the Union Jack hauled down and the Fleur-de-Lis hoisted above the fort.

La Bourdonnais promptly proclaimed that all Company employees, civil and military, were to become prisoners of war; while everyone else—meaning the native population and a few European sight-seers—were free to leave or stay. Madras was held to a ransom of £400,000, and the Governor's two young half-caste children were taken as hostages.

These were the official conditions as dictated by Marquis Dupleix in Pondicherry. But Admiral La Bourdonnais had some unofficial ideas of his own. He was willingly wheedled by Governor Morse, who was anxious to ransom his offspring at the expense of "Messire Duplicity." Thus the freebooting *aventurier*, who saw nothing dishonorable in double-crossing a double-crosser, secretly agreed to a 10 per cent sellout of £40,000: all of which would be his to pocket. And the devil take Dupleix! As one merchant expressed it: " 'Tis generally believed that M. La Bourdonnay (in Diamonds, Jewells, &c.) screw'd us of a Purse of about 100,000 Pagodas [about £40,000], to the Exclusion of M. Duplexe. May Providence deliver us from such Scoundrells! I don't much trust to their Faith." [9]

Most of the garrison, including Clive, knew nothing of this negotiation. "Be Goddamned if I'll lick La Bourdonnais' boots!" he said, in Dr. Rae's shell-shattered *godown* or storeroom, on the very evening that Morse & Council paid off their captor. "If blacks go free, *we* go free!"

"How so?" said Rae.

Clive yanked open a splintered chest marked *Piece-Goods* and pulled out Muslim pajamas, frocks, turban cloth. "Strip! Slip on these mogul-breeches."

Maskelyne expressed apprehension over how they should disguise their Celtic fairness, to which Clive responded: "Stain our skins with

[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*

ink! The dark of night, and our knowledge of Moors [Urdu or Hindustani], should see us through." [10]

According to Rae, there were six men in that room: Clive, Maskelyne, John Walsh (Maskelyne's cousin, hitherto mentioned as Clive's companion in the notorious harem episode), Levi Moses (another fellow clerk), Khelíl (Rae's servant-assistant), and himself. "They had ably mann'd my Walls during ye Siege, and saved my House from Plunder." [11] Moses, in his fragmented account, refers to "the Six of us" by way of initials (*e.g.*, "Dr. R.").

The five Europeans stripped off their European clothes and slipped on long loose drawers, white cotton robes, and Persian slippers, then wound the turban cloth carefully around their heads. When all were in readiness, Clive cautioned: "Have a care not to betray yourselves." [12] Thus disguised, they flitted out of the fort.

Muhammed Sháh, the nominal Grand Mughal, was incensed at Neváb Anveruddín's connivance with Dupleix. He wrote,

> *Nádir Sháh will not suffer any upheavals in his empire, nor will I. These are his words to me: "If ever you are disturbed by court intrigues or provincial disorders, and require my assistance, I can come from Kandahar in forty days. Bid one and all to walk in the path of submission and obedience to you, dear brother, and warn them that in the event of their rebellion I shall return and blot them out of the Book of Creation."* [13]

None was feared more than Nádir Sháh, the great bogyman.

Forewarned, Anveruddín was forearmed—in England's favor. He served notice on Dupleix: "In spite of our explicit instructions that you should forbear from attacking Madras, you have dispatched an expedition there. We are therefore not disposed to allow Pondicherry to continue in your possession. We accordingly propose to advance against your town. You transgress all bounds; this is improper." [14]

> *. . . O how wretched*
> *Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours!*

[10] *Rae Journal*; Moses, Levi: *Daybook*.
[11] *Rae Journal*.
[12] *Ibid*.
[13] Hámid.
[14] *Ibid*.

But not Dupleix. He proceeded according to plan, undismayed. Jeanne assured him that Anveruddín was only bluffing, and that to call his bluff would be to proclaim French ascendancy. So Dupleix replied: "The captains of the warships of France are bound by the orders of their king, and will not care to listen to the counsels of others." [15]

Astounded, the Nevàb of the Carnatic promptly reported Dupleix' highhanded self-determination to his immediate master, the *Nizám* or Governor General of the Deccan (South India), Chin Killich Khán Asef Jáh Nizámul-Mulk. The Nizám demanded an explanation, and got it: "When the King of France learned that several of his ships were seized by the English, he ordered me to take Madras and secure restitution. This I am doing. No harm will be done to the merchants of Madras; and when my king has received satisfaction for his losses, I shall be happy to turn the place over to you or your viceroy, the Nevàb of Arcot [Anveruddín]." [16]

Dupleix then wrote to La Bourdonnais: "I believe I have found a means of keeping the Nevàb quiet, by telling him we will give up Madras. Of course we will not. We must hold the place on a pretense that the English cannot make adequate restitution. In this respect, I do not see how they can pay a ransom that is set in excess of their total assets. Do you?" [17]

La Bourdonnais, a gentleman buccaneer, answered guardedly: "I am so disgusted with this wretched Madras that I would give an arm never to have set foot in it. It has cost us too much. Whether I am right or wrong, I believe myself to be acting within my powers by granting a capitulation to the governor of this place. I have pledged my honor to the English authorities that I will treat favorably the ransom of the fort and city." [18]

Dupleix remonstrated, but to no avail. La Bourdonnais reminded him that the capture of Madras was their own idea, without royal or *Compagnie* authorization, "and I shall not be held responsible for the consequences of duplicity and bad faith." [19]

[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.; Lettres et conventions des gouverneurs de Pondichéry.*
[17] La Bourdonnais.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Ibid.*

Having pocketed his boodle of £40,000, La Bourdonnais took French leave of Madras on October 23: agreement having been made that French forces should occupy the town, *pro forma*, for a month. When La Bourdonnais abandoned Madras, the gods were against him. Later captured and fleeced by English privateersmen he begged, borrowed, and stole his way back to France; then spent three years in the Bastille for corruption, embezzlement, extortion, and breach of trust—to say nothing of insubordination. He was acquitted of Dupleix' crimes, with which he was charged, yet not without loss of honor. As a corsair, La Bourdonnais had acted honorably. But his was a profession that had lost its respectability, if not its glamour, and he was foremost among its final martyrs.

Dupleix exploded when he learned of La Bourdonnais' foul play. He ordered "that Breton cur" to be taken dead or alive, and put a handsome price on his head. Consequently, when British pirates seized the Admiral, the Marquis was pleased not to pay for his release. He wrote to the French foreign minister, denouncing "that dirty dog" (*ce chien-là*) as a traitor, and seemed satisfied when justice was finally served.[20]

Lest Madras slip from his grasp, Dupleix pounced on it through the person of Capitaine Pâris Paradis. The place could not now be ransomed for all the money in the world. By proclamation of *Son Excellence le Gouverneur Général*, it would henceforth be a French settlement. Dupleix, always expedient, had a reason for sending Paradis to Madras instead of an officer of superior rank. It seems that the handsome young captain had taken an overt fancy to the seductive Ján Bégam, who by no means repelled his amorous advances.[21]

[20] *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses.*
[21] *Ibid.*

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TO PONDICHERRY

Five Britons and one Hindu, disguised as Muslim business mercantile agents (*doobashes*), slogged southward along the dusty roads of Carnatic province. They ate in village bazaars, relieved nature in the jungle, and slept in *choutries* or wayside flophouses. All was well until they entered the fortress-town of Chingleput, thirty miles southwest of Madras. What happened there, and what subsequently occurred, is recorded in the journal of Dr. John Rae. Neither Clive, Maskelyne, nor Walsh made mention of the incidents (for obvious reasons!) in their otherwise detailed letters and/or formal reminiscences now extant. Moses, in his fragmented daybook, makes mere allusions—which substantiate Rae's full account.

The *chawkídár* or gatekeeper of Chingleput greeted the six fugitive-travelers with a scowl. "*Bismilláh!*" he barked. "*Kyá, tú Musalmání hayn?*" (What, in God's name! Are you Muslim?) [1]

Clive answered at once, in the affirmative.

The official leered, spat. "*Valláh, dikháo, yá tú jizyet adá-krógé.*" (Prove it, by Allah, or you shall pay the poll-tax.) [2]

Clive, Moses, and Khelíl lowered their longdrawers for a routine inspection.

"*Alláhua'lemul-ghayb!*" (God knows the hidden things!) the gatekeeper said. "*Níz tú?*" (And you?) thrusting a finger at the other three.[3]

The masqueraders knew the *jizyeh* (shearing) to be a notorious head-tax levied on all "unbelievers" by the Grand Mughal and his deputies. It was a tribute to the True Faith that every Infidel had to pay upon entering a town of the circumcised, an extortion racket that "skinned" many a well-heeled Hindu. It was profiteering in the name

[1] Rae's quaint orthography: *Bismillah– keah too Moosulmauny hein?*
[2] Rae's orthography: *Vullah! dickow yah too Jizziet uddah-croguae.*
[3] Rae's orthography: *Ullah-ooallumool-guaeb; Neez too?*

of Allah, a foreskin being assessed according to the length of its owner's purse. Several early European traders in Mughal India had suffered circumcision in order to escape the *jizyeh*, and (as hitherto noted) to ingratiate themselves with the Islamic rulers. But with the sharp rise of Company influence and affluence, this sacrifice had been abandoned in favor of the tax; albeit "clipcocks" were nonetheless employed as inland agents and envoys, in deference to Muslim prejudice. Still, however cutthroat the *jizyeh* seemed, it wasn't as outrageous to English sensibility as ritual mutilation of the male organ.

Akbar, in his effort to unite Hindu and Muslim, had abolished the *jizyeh* in 1563, concurrently forbidding circumcision of week-old infants as cruel and traumatizing and raising the age when the operation could be performed to three years, and refusing to circumcise certain of his sons in deference to Brahmanism. Jehángír and Sháh Jehán followed his example, but not 'Aurangzeyb. In his crusade to Islamize India, 'Aurangzeyb reimposed the oppressive tax in 1663. Sir Abraham Shipman, then Governor of Bombay, wrote to the Company Directors: "Ye Marchants living at Surat are under a very greate Tyrannie, their Money being liable to be taken away when ye Mogull or his Governour pleaseth, and their Persons abused." [4] It is believed that Shivají, as a prisoner of 'Aurangzeyb in 1666, was forcibly deprepucized: an outrage that fanned the flames of Maratha hatred of Mughal domination.

In Rae's words, "We were ready-prepared for ye inevitable Eventuality." Pointing to Rae, Maskelyne, and Walsh, Clive spoke out: "*Alláhua'lem, yé sihmerd hamárá jedídá hayn. Vé makhtún aznev hayn, va-derdnák hanóz hayn, chún tú dékhógé.*" (Allah knows, these three are our converts. They have just been circumcised, and are still sore, as you shall see.) [5]

The three "converts" let down their pajamas to reveal bandaged mentules. The gatekeeper grinned and spat. "*Ilhemdulilláh azán, ay f'lán, illá man tú zindeh póst-chíltá chún kuffár!*" (Praise Allah for that, O such-a-one, else I'd have skinned you alive for heretics!) [6]

Rae explains that "Only Rascalls & Renegades make use of Gentiles

[4] *Bombay MS. Records.*

[5] Rae's orthography: *Ullah-ooallum! yea semurd humarah judeedah hein; vae mucktoon uznaw hein, vadurdnawk hunooze hein, choon too daeckoguae.*

[6] Rae's orthography: *Illhumdoolillah uzzaun, aye Flawn, illah mun too zindah poost-cheeltah choon Cooffar!*

for purposes other than Proselytism; but after ye Disciple be Mahometized in ye Flesh, even Sodomy is orthodox!" [7]

Six fugitives later crowed over how they, and bandaged mentules, had made a dupe (or so they then thought!) of the Chingleput *chawkídár*. "We were stopt at Chingleputt," Levi Moses scrawled in his daybook, "where my Circumcision was found of great Advantage, and that of Bob C. & one Culleel, a Moor, to escape the extortionate Tax which must have impoverisht us." He does not mention "ye poulticed *Mentulae*" of Rae's ingenuity.

Though the six had been passed through they had not been cleared. There was the inspection by the *singhistríyan*. These "tiger-women" were the Mughal Empire's amazons: *e.g.*, the *Qehremánát* (Heroines) or *Urdú-Bégamí* (Warrioresses, "Matrons of the Army"), a corps of ferocious tribades who ripped off their prisoners' testicles with claw-like fingernails and who slashed uncircumcised penises with razor-edged scimitars.

The still suspicious gatekeeper sent some "tigresses" to investigate. If they found what he expected he would make an example of those heretics and deceivers! Among the Wilks MSS. there is the frayed and fragmented leaf of an official recordbook, dated 7 *Ramezánul-Hijreh* 1159 (September 24, 1746) and doubtless found after the capture of Chingleput in 1752, which reads as follows in the column marked "Circumcised" (*Makhtún*): "6 professed Muslims (*Musalmání b'izhár*), 4 like Infidels (*Kuffár-sá*) [Apparently Moses, and of course Khelíl, were Semitic-looking]; 3 converts (*jedídhá*) poultice-bandaged (*band-i-pukhteh*). I will investigate (*tehqíq kháhem nimúd*)." An insertion in the column marked "Uncircumcised" (*Námakhtún*), under date of 9 *Ramezán* (September 26), reads: "3 Unbelievers (*Kuffár*), incognito (*póshídeh*); 3 heretics (*khárijíyeh*). Guilty of fraud (*mujrim sebab-i-deghá*). Tax (*jizyeh*): 840 rupees."

How did the *chawkídár* make the revealing inspection? "We were assaulted by Furies, who work'd their Evil upon us & stript us of our All." Such is Moses' laconic entry.

The Lambádís were a night-prowling tribe of thugs and thieves. Their inherited profession was that of the "brinjarry" (*banjárá*) or traveling salesman, but their characteristic avocation was robbery and rape. They had long been sutlers and freebooters for the Mughal

[7] *Rae Journal.*

armies, and Lambádí females were the most promiscuous in all of India. As Abbé J. A. Dubois noted in the early nineteenth century: "They are reputed sometimes to band themselves together in search of men, whom they compel by force to satisfy their lewd desires." [8] These were the *singhistríyan*, the fierce and infamous "tiger-women."

Dr. Rae had certainly heard of the "loochers" (*luchché*, meat-hounds) or "looties" (*lútíyeh*, sodomites), whose marauding gangs stripped and abused wealthy wayfarers. He had also heard tell of diabolic cults of Pariah women called "she-wolves" (*bhériyástríyan*), zealots of the death-goddess Kálí, who hunted men in "packs" and forced them to slake their savage thirsts "or did most viciously mastuprate them to Death." [9] Rae took these tales with a grain of salt, as vestiges of the ancient Sodom and Amazon myths, for it was hard to believe that satyrs and sirens declared open season on travelers—even in a country of the incredible.

It was just outside a village along the Palar River, not far south of Chingleput, that the six impostors met their Nemeses. The hellcats sprang upon them as they lay sleeping in a roadhouse. Pinned down by thirty lusty women, they were stripped naked, and greedy hands gripped their genitals. "When she lay'd hold on me," Rae recalled, one of the loathsome women shrieked: "*Áré, ín merd maghlúf hay!*" (Hey, this man is ensheathed [uncircumcised]!) [10]

"*Zerdak!*" (Carrot!) squawked another, spitting. "*Lá-hawl!*" (Fie upon it!)

Zerdak (Rae: *zurduck*) or "carrot," as a vulgarism for the uncircumcised penis, doubtless arose from its similarity to that ruddy tapering root. It has since come to denote any *membrum virile*, owing perhaps to a diminution of the deprepucization mania. *Kír* or *zakr* (cock, token of manhood) was the common term for a circumcised phallus.

" '*Nah-mucktoon* [uncircumcised!]' howls another Hag, and so ye 3 of us of whole Skin [*i.e.*, Rae, Maskelyne, and Walsh] are found out for Gentiles!" [11]

They were roused in spite of themselves. The furies mounted them,

[8] *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies.*
[9] *Rae Journal.*
[10] Rae's orthography: *Arry! een murd mughloof hey!*
[11] *Rae Journal.*

turn by turn, panting and snorting, squeezing, biting, clawing, in their venereal frenzy.

"*Áré!*" (Look to it!) a voice crackled.

The tiny irritating hairs covering the cowhage or cowage ("ye Cow-itch, *Macuna pruriens*") pod cause an intolerable itching which is intensified by friction. Dr. Rae could feel that it was "ye *Cuppy-cutch-choo*" (*kapíkachchú* or "monkey-itch") these foul-smelling witches were rubbing on his sex organ, "most particularly under ye Foreskin." The others felt likewise. (Clive, for one, "stung most maddeningly about ye Corona & [circumcisional] Cicatrice of his Rod, on such violent Stretch as 'twould seem never to flag.") [12] With daggers at their throats, the men dared not stir until these female rapists tied them up and disappeared.

The doctor records,

> *After close Examination, I was satisfy'd our Hurts were only Skin-deep after all, yet could not help observing ye Prickle is damnable like to a Gun. Ye Enemy can take it & use it against its proper Owner; it shoots just as streight & as hard for ye one as for ye other, and hath no Will in ye matter at all. In sooth, 'tis that one disobedient & unruly Member without a Will of its own! . . . We each of us suffer'd violent Erection & burning Itch for several Hours, and ye slightest Touch tortured our nettled Flesh: ye Temptation to abuse ourselves like Baboons* [i.e., *masturbate furiously*] *being nigh insufferable, tho' Manly Good Sense & anxious Abstraction shew'd salutary. In sooth, we dared not stir till ye fiery Swelling & Throbbing had eased, and till ye Prickling was in some measure bearable. R. C.* [*Clive*] *utter'd Curse upon Curse (wholly like him under ordinary Circumstances, and now justify'd) and confess'd he was like to been tickled to Death; that E. M. & J. W.* [*Maskelyne and Walsh*] *should be damn'd glad they got off with a whole Skin; express'd a vexatious Feeling of having been stript to ye Nerves, for that "Damnable Circumcision hath left me thin-skinn'd: carnally irritable." Jesu! did he think Us any ye less tormented, and what was his state of Irritation before ye removal of that offending Skin? . . . J. W.* [*Jack Walsh*] *would not be appeased; asserted, "You are none ye more peel'd & techy*

[12] *Ibid.*

than I," and "That infernal Monkey-itch was got under my Skin, and I've a Mind to lop it off." But for all his Complaint, he would brook no Relief from me: perhaps fearing ye Fate of R. C. [i.e. *circumcision*]. Oh, ye thousand natural Shocks that Flesh is heir to!

Clive had learned to abide with a painfully sensitive phallus following "mutilation"; but Maskelyne and Walsh, on the ragged edge of impatience, "aggravated ye Annoyance with repeated Rubbing provoqued by their inflamed Foreskins." [13] Opium pills helped their condition in some measure. The ferret-eyed Scot, ever alert to instances of aberration, could detect no compulsive "onanism" in Moses or Khelíl—and seemed surprised, if not disappointed, that "R. C. held off abusing himself as is his vile Habit, it now being so uncommon painfull, as following his much-lamented [preputial] Loss; for he must never so long have given over Self-abuse as in ye Days after his Circumcision, like to ye present Circumstance, doubtless a but temporary Cure as well. How ye Mind afflicts ye Senses, and *Vice versa*!"

The irritation of all Sáhibs was finally alleviated by an ointment (*mómíyáí*) filched, by light-fingered Khelíl, from an old Hindu quack-salver. "But ye worst of it was," Rae concludes, "we were Beggar'd compleat: stript even of our Cloathes, which oblidged us to don Breech-clouts like common Serfs, and to steal Food like miserable Parasites."

It took them eight days of legwork to reach Pondicherry, the French stronghold in Hindustan: the "Paris of India." There, still in disguise, they witnessed a sight unworthy of civilized human beings.

Marquis Dupleix had arrested Governor Morse and the members of Council for finagling with La Bourdonnais, hustling them in palanquins down to the "Froggery," contemptuous nickname of the French ("Froggy" or "Frog-eater") capital. Chained and stripped stark naked, the Englishmen were paraded through the streets of Pondicherry, where they were pelted with filth and jeers by mobs of Europeans and Indians: "*Foutez-vous, goddams!*" . . . "*Tú máchút!*" (You mothercunts!) [14]

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] *Ibid.*; *Moses Daybook*; Hámid, Pillái, *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses.*

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THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Fort St. David lay basking on high ground by the sea, nestled between the forks of Penner River, fringed by towering mango trees and coconut palms. It was a small English settlement twenty miles south of Pondicherry, established (1690) to keep an eye on the French while trading with the rich Maratha province of Tanjore. It was a Garden of Eden.

The six escapees headed for the Governor's villa, where they were welcomed in a flurry of "flabbergastation." Bearers of sad tidings, they shocked the Governor and shook paradise: *Madras seized, Morse a prisoner!* Fort St. David was garrisoned by a mere two hundred European hirelings and a hundred sepoys. The situation seemed hopeless.

Having washed, shaved, and changed to knee breeches and shirts, the newcomers toured the fortified establishment.

Clive said: "The die is cast. Either we or the French are destined to rise from mere traders to rulers. By God, if we had but one man of energy and daring at the head of our affairs out here, we should be masters of the Carnatic in a snatch."

Rae replied: "Aye; but it appears more likely the Frenchies will be in that position before long, and that we shall not have a single spot left here to call our own. But time will tell."

"Time, and a man of action." [1]

The man of action was there and largely through him the East India Company developed into "the most formidable Commercial Republick known in the World since the Demolition of Carthage." [2] But without Clive to answer Dupleix' challenge, the French may well have prevailed.

[1] *Rae Journal.*
[2] Caraccioli.

"As damn'd a place as ever Men were troop'd in!" So one British officer described Fort St. David. There he found "black Women instead of white, with boil'd Rice instead of Bread, and in the Punch-houses such Cut-throats that a Man need have the Indies to pay their Bills!" [3]

The streets of this little garrison-town were aswarm with yelling, strong-smelling "ragheads" whose cheeks bulged with betelnut and whose red-stained lips spurted flashes of juice. Loincloth'd sweepers shoveled up the dung of cows, camels, elephants, and men, heaving it into creaking bullock carts; others watered down the dust with goatskin sprinklers.

The newcomers had plenty of time and they spent it in the pungent, pulsing bazaar of Cuddalore, the native quarter. But whoring and gambling had become more nerve-racking than relaxing to Robert Clive. He took opium pills to ease his irritability. Work—pure action—was what he really wanted and needed.

Rae [4] diagnoses his "Venereal Condition" at this time:

> *It is extreamly aukward & embarrassing for R. C. to wear tight Breeches, as his Verpa [circumcised penis] be yet so sensitive that he suffers frequent (nay, persistent) Erections by dint of Friction & Constriction; wherefore he hath adopted Mogull-breeches, which it is said were fashion'd by ye Moors for their own Comfort following Circumcision, most commonly enacted (unlike ye Jews) at ye Approach of Puperty, which leaves ye Verge very tender & exposes ye Nut [glans] to chance Titillations. Ye Gentoos, when they wear Long-drawers, wear them Skin-tight; as they enjoy ye protective Benefits of ye Prepuce, and are therefore less given to ye venereal Excesses that so degrade ye Moors. If Chuleel is to be trusted, which I am of firm Opinion he is, R. C. is become a Moor in Spirit as in Flesh; for he hath given himself up to All ye foul & unnatural Vices of ye Circumcized, and hath not even eschew'd ye puerile Habit of Mastupration, which Circumcision is alledged to cure, but which he did openly & most shameless in Chuleel's presence: ye while importunating him* irrumare *[to perform fellatio], which ye poor Wretch acceded to (nay, not once, but repeatedly!) in Fear of his Life; as C., in his*

[3] *Voyage to the East Indies.*
[4] *Rae Journal.*

Words, be Vusheeanah [vehshíyáneh, *like a wild beast*]. *Sooth to say, C. is become a Satyr: to ye Degree that I regret having clipt* [deprepucized] *him; now of Opinion he were better off out of this corrupting Clime, where he is become Moorish vile & dangerous, and removed to ye salutary Air of Europe, where even with an abnormose Foreskin he should have fared more natural. In a Word, ye Remedy was worse than ye Ailment!*

At this time, Lieutenant John Dalton recalls Clive having remarked that a pure-souled disciple was confounded when he saw the high-minded Aristippus coming out of a brothel. "My good man," the philosopher replied, "the vice is not in going in but in not coming out!" Clive also rationalized that "devout Gentoos [Hindus] have a Saying, 'Fornication with a Prostitute is a Virtue which rids a Man of Sin'—the Sin being the unnatural Denial of one's Flesh, which in Time doth corrupt the Spirit." [5]

It is reasonable to assume that Clive did not *live* in whorehouses, as Rae seems to infer; but his purported affliction with satyriasis or "mentulomania" did not keep him out very long. And according to Rae, Clive could only afford such extravagant debauchery by becoming a masterful gambler. "His Bills of Whoredom are outrageous, but even more so his Licence to Plunder." [6]

Punchhouse and bawdyhouse lined the walls of Fort St. David. Punch and sangaree were the grogshop specialties. *Panch* means "five" in Hindustani; and Britons relished that tangy concoction of rum, sugar, lime juice, spice, and water. There were also pale ale and porter, toddy and arrack; and for those who smoked, cheroots and opium pipes and hookahs or "hubble-bubbles." There were narcotic confections such as *ma'jún*, and aphrodisiac drinks such as *imsák*, which prolonged a man's pleasure in carnal intercourse by sustaining erection and retarding orgasm. And there were hemp wads and opium pills, potions of cantharidian datura ("which maketh a Man as tho' he were half out of his Wits; *viz.*, 'Lechers & their Punks, with Dewtry, commit fantastical Adowtry' "), betel and bhang or hashish. The nautch (an aphrodisiac dance) and fellatio (penis sucking) were specialties of the "knocking-shop." [7]

[5] *Dalton Journal.*
[6] *Rae Journal.*
[7] *Ibid.*

The *bará sáhib* (big sir), of the junior and senior merchant castes, usually kept his own harem of *beebees* or native concubines. Some (Governor Morse, for example) fathered acknowledged children by them, as they would with legitimate white wives; hence the creation of the so-called "half-caste" or *cheechee* (Hindustani *chíchí*, "fie! for shame!"), the opprobrious term for a Eurasian. Those who couldn't afford a seraglio—to wit, the writers and factors—took up with bazaar women or availed themselves of "black Urchins," pedophilia (the sexual use of boys) then being in vogue, or practiced homosexuality, or relied on the last resort: "self-pollution."

Clive found Muslim women extremely adulterous, despite their veils. But they had a good excuse, their menfolk serving as their pimps or neglecting them for boys. Indeed, a few coins helped these veiled wantons to forget that Maskelyne and Walsh were uncircumcised and therefore "unclean." [8] Hindu females were swived from early girlhood, so the sporting Sahibs found them "shamelessly bare-arsed."

Dr. Rae, whose journal contains many curious observations, takes note of Hindu-Muslim tastes:

> *Whilest Gentoo Wenches naturally delight in Venery, and will employ their Mouth upon a Man only when desired thereunto, ye unnatural Moorish Dames ordinarily will deign but fellare [to suck the penis] than yield to compleat Coition (for abnormose Fear of Impregnation, unbeknown to Life-loving Gentoos) or even to Penetration of their Hinder Parts, which they frequently suffer by their Paederastick Men-folk. ('Tis reported, on good Authority, that Moorish Females, by dint of Purdah [veiled seclusion], are much given to Manusturpration & Tribadery, ye Cunnilinctus of ye Ancients; hence their Aversion to Coitum per Cunnum.) If ye Man be Uncircumcized, he can not but swive Gentoo Whores: without he be well-paying, in which case that abominable Inch of Skin is wellcome!*

Almost every evening, Clive and his fellow libertines stalked up dark staircases to where lutes resonated a sensuous strain. Nautch dancers loomed out of purple shadows, like sirens of woven wind. In a continuous ecstasy of tense bodily movement—with arms sweeping, hips wheeling, knees undulating to an unceasingly hypnotic rhythm—they writhed to a crisis. Garments slipped to the floor, and

[8] *Ibid.*

soon the dancers were utterly bare; then they glided toward the spell-bound patrons, encircling them, offering their swelling breasts, scarlet-tipped. Gyrating their knees and buttocks, making subtle and suggestive motions with supple hands, with ripe, pouting lips. Smooth and bulging clefts beckoned and the urge to penetrate the velvety depths became overwhelming.

From such encounters, Clive (and several others, including Walsh) procured the pox. It was a light dose, marked by a couple of "pearls" on the glans penis. After nitro-mercurial treatment, Clive let his passions be amenable to reason.[9] Conscience-stricken, he wrote to Uncle Dan: 'The World seems to be vastly debased of late, and Interest carries it entirely before Merit—especially in this Service—tho' I should think myself very Undeserving of any Favour were I only to build my Foundation on the Strength of the former." [10] And he may then have echoed Petronius:

Why doth the womb of Ind, beneath its dusty crust,
Abort such brilliant gems so precious and august?
So that, I say, all women may in diamonds trust
And lift their wanton legs upon the couch of lust.

On October 24, 1746, at a council consultation called by "John Hinde, Esqr., Governour-President of Fort St. David & Cuddalore," it was "Agreed . . . the War with France being broke out, and it being therefore highly Proper to have our Garrison in the best Order we can, . . . that each Lieutenant have Five (5) Pagodas per Month, and each Ensign Four (4)." [11]

Writer's pay: £5 a year. Soldier's salary: £10 to £12! Clive wrote home:

Five of us Europeans & a Moor made good our Escape from Madrass, disguized in the Habit of a Doobash [Muslim agent] & black'd, and arrived Safe at St. David's the Beginning of Oct., where we found ourselves under the disagreeable Circumstances of being unprovided for, till the Gentlemen of this place offer'd us a Monthly Writership. But we are of Opinion that acting in a Military Sphere

[9] *Rae Medical Recordbook.*
[10] *Clive Papers.*
[11] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*

(now at a very low Ebb) is the most Honourable of the two, and most conducive to our & the Company's Interest.[12]

Awaiting confirmation of their applications for military service, Clive, Maskelyne, and Walsh "scraped along" in the gambling dens. Clive, a crack hand at cards, supported the three of them.

Lantern light oozed over the whitewashed gaming room of a Fort St. David punchhouse. The atmosphere was tense, edgy, hazed and reeking with tobacco smoke. A boozy cluster of young blades was gathered round one of the gambling tables, watching two gamblers at a game of "brag" or poker. One was Clive, showing sullen irritation; the other a cold-blooded, cocksure sublieutenant (ensign) of sepoys.

Suddenly Clive rose and slammed his fist on the table. "You've cheated, sirrah," he roared, "and I'm damned if I shall pay you!"

"You'll pay," said the ensign icily, "or I shall be forced to have you out."

"*Hah!* A *brutum fulmen,* I see. The mountains are in labor; a laughable mouse is born!"

The ensign rose and calmly called for his dueling-pistols. His matter-of-fact manner awed the others, but infuriated Clive.

The two men turned on their heels, but Clive let off a snap shot—and missed.

Then the ensign strutted up to his scowling opponent and pressed the pistol to Clive's head. "Withdraw the charge or I fire."

Clive folded his arms, not breathing a word.

The ensign bared his teeth. "Beg for your life."

"And if I refuse?"

"Then I fire."

Clive's lips puffed out, his cheeks reddened. "Fire and be damned! I said you cheated, and I say so still; and I'll *never* pay you."

The ensign lowered his weapon. "You're stark-mad!" He snatched the pistol out of Clive's grip and lunged from the room, muttering "*Madman!*"

The onlookers crowded around Clive who said: "He has given me my life; and though I'll never pay him, I shall never mention his behavior at the card table. I'm quits with him." He later admitted to

[12] *Maskelyne Papers.*

his intimates: "I was froze with fear: not for my life, but of losing my reputation as fearless!" [13]

[13] *Voyage to the East Indies; Dalton Journal;* Gleig, *et al.*

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THE MAN OF ACTION

Marquis Dupleix, gloating over his seizure of Madras, now prepared to grab Fort St. David. This lone outpost was the British East India Company's second-strongest footing in Southern India. With that footing lost, the Coromandel Coast would be in French hands.

Thus, in early December of '46, Dupleix launched an army (under his able Swiss, Paradis) of nine hundred Europeans and seven hundred sepoys, with six siege guns and six mortars, against the three hundred defenders of Fort St. David. Governor Hinde and Council dispatched an urgent appeal to the *Nizám* or Viceroy of South India, at Hyderabad, apprizing him of "all the robberies, cruelties, and depredations" committed in his kingdom by "that insolent and perfidious nation, the French," and entreating him (in the name of King George II) "to call the Nevàb of Arcot [Anveruddín] to account for his past transactions and interpose your power to restore, as near as possible in its original state, what has been so unjustly taken from us." [1]

This moment of crisis for John Company was to be a turning point in the unsettled life of Robert Clive. "I have wrote with Ink," he informed Uncle Dan. "Now I shall write with Blood." [2]

The siege of Fort St. David raged for three touch-and-go months. Now realizing that "Messire Duplicity" had designs upon his domain, the Carnatic Nevàb sought to restore a balance of power by sending his sons Mehfúz 'Alí Khán and Muhammed 'Alí Khán with an armed force to aid the English. Anveruddín's change of heart came none too soon! But it was prompted by a communiqué from his immediate

[1] Hámid.
[2] *Clive Papers.*

master, the Deccani Nizám, ordering him "to protect and support the English (who have been obedient and submissive to us for many years) in every respect against the unfaithful and criminal French." [3]

There was murderously hot work until mid-March of 1747, but "fire-eater" Clive enjoyed every minute of it. Three times the French tried to storm the fort and three times they were driven back with heavy losses. Acting upon the premise that "Attack is the best defense," Mr. Clive led several successful foredawn sorties, the last of which ran Captain Paradis' jolted and jaded troops off the settlement premises and pellmell for Pondicherry. How this feat was finally accomplished, and St. David saved from St. George's fate, is typical of the period.

Informed that Dupleix was planning to buy off the native reinforcements sent by Nevàb Anveruddín to aid the English, Governor Hinde (fearful that he could not outbid the French) anticipated the worst. Dupleix, with all the plunder of Madras at his command, was in that enviable position to satisfy the "extreme lucrative disposition" of Mehfúz 'Alí Khán, Nevàb Anveruddín's mercenary son. But younger half-brother Muhammed 'Alí Khán, a lad of honor and virtue, could not be bought; and rather than cause a falling-out with the venal Mehfúz, he headed for home. Clive writes: "Soon after Dupleix bought Mahfooze Ally Cawn off, Mahomed Ally Cawn return'd to Arcot with the greatest part of the Native Forces, seemingly much disgusted at the treacherous Behaviour of his Brother." [4] And so Hinde and Council were to report to their London employers that "we had the Misfortune to be reduced . . . to the utmost Extremity . . . ; in which destitute Circumstances the French . . . made another Attempt upon us by Land." [5]

Paradis, with two thousand troops, launched his grand assault on March 13. Clive, outnumbered ten to one, helped lead the counter-assault. (*Attack is the best defense!*) "Whereupon," he tells us, "the French retreated to Pondicherry with great Precipitation." [6]

Another demoralizing setback for the French! The Marquis gave up his designs on St. David in disgust; and the Nevàb, like a jackal

[3] Hámid.
[4] *Orme Papers.*
[5] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*
[6] *Clive Papers.*

out of lion danger, came slinking back to him for palm-tickling favors. Son Mehfúz suggested this expedient. As long as the French paid more than the English, wrong was right and black was white.

But through the maneuvering of Madame Dupleix, Fort St. David almost fell by treachery. One Ibn Betúteh, an Islamized Hindu who had been Governor Morse's native secretary and interpreter (and whose harem Clive and Walsh had allegedly invaded), was released and hired by Ján Bégam to spy for the French. Ibn Betúteh agreed, purportedly after he had fornicated with the Bégam's eldest daughter. Joining the staff of Governor John Hinde at St. David, he gleaned "exact Intelligence of the most minute Transactions" of the English —"All our Counsells were betray'd," Clive later wrote—and passed them on, in cipher, to a phantomlike go-between.

This was Jeanne's lithe and lovely sixteen-year-old daughter, Marie-Rose, the wife of a Portuguese nobleman in Madras. During the siege of St. David, this dusky adventuress slipped through the English lines under cover of darkness, and in the nude, concealing her tiny *rouleaux* of intelligence between the lips of her vulva. Once, when caught by two Muslim pickets, she posed as a vagrant prostitute and submitted to sodomy ere they let her go. But her dangerous game was short-lived. Ibn Betúteh, betrayed by sepoys with whom he had homosexual contact, was hanged as a traitor in full view of the French lines.[7]

"We had discover'd a Conspiracy," Clive writes, "form'd with the Commander of our Sepoys to desert with All his Men to the French. This Discovery led us to seizing Mr. Morse's Doobash [Ibn Betúteh, who had bribed the commandant of sepoys with lavish French promises]. A General Court-martial being held upon these Traytors, the Doobash & Sepoy Officer [whom Hámid describes as mutual *ustání* or "bungholers"] were hang'd: the Doobash, at the Gallows, declaring Mr. Morse's Innocence of his Intrigues with M. Dupleix. This Plot being unravell'd, the French gave over their Designs by Treachery." [8]

On the second day of May, 1747, the Governor's Council at Fort St. David dispatched the following memo to the Right Honourable Court of Directors in London: "Mr. *Robert Clive*, Writer in the Service, being of a Martial Disposition and having acted as a Volun-

[7] Hámid.
[8] *Orme Papers.*

teer in our late Engagements, We have granted him an Ensign's Commission, upon his Application for the same." [9] The Court replied (December 4): "Be sure to encourage Ensign Clive in his Martial Persuits, according to his Merit. Any Improvement he shall make therein shall be duely regarded by Us." [10]

Clive was now ensign or sub-lieutenant of the Second Company of European Volunteer Foot Soldiers of Fort St. David.

John Company heaved a sigh of relief when Admiral Edward ("Old Dreadnought") Boscawen skimmed into St. David Roads on July 29, 1748, with a formidable fleet bringing over three and a half thousand British soldiers fresh from England. According to one observer, Boscawen's squadrons "form'd the greatest Marine Force belonging to any one European Nation that had ever been seen in the Indian seas." [11]

The garrison at Fort St. David was now six thousand strong. Major Stringer Lawrence, newly come from the campaigns in Europe, had rounded up a volunteer army of over two thousand "whites" and "blacks." Arriving on New Year's Day of '48, this "stout, hale man of fifty" (affectionately called "The Old Cock") worked night and day recruiting and drilling. Fluent in Hindustani, Mr. Clive was appointed chief European drillmaster of sepoys; and he saw to it that "The Hon'ble Company's Black Troops on the Coast of Coromandell" were equal to any the French had trained.

On August 19, Boscawen and Lawrence besieged Pondicherry by land and sea. For two raging, bloody months they hammered away at Dupleix' citadel. To smash it was to smash French power and prestige in the East—perhaps forever. And thus would Messire Duplicity be forced to swallow his oft-repeated words to the Indian people, that "The English are shopkeepers, not soldiers."

Ensign Clive stood in the advanced-battery entrenchments, his scarlet-and-gold tunic and buff-colored breeches smudged and stained by smoke and dust and dirty weather. His jackboots were caked with mud, and his white-powdered hair smirched with soot. He tipped his cocked hat against the blinding sun, gazing intently at the jagged line

[9] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Voyage to the East Indies.*

of enemy outworks. By special assignment from Major Lawrence, Sub-Lieutenant Clive commanded one of the forward batteries, to be in his favorite spot—the front and thick of the fighting.

Drums rattled, bugles blared, and a stream of "whitecoats" tipped with streaks of cold steel poured out of the enemy trenches. Billows of smoke and an earth-shaking rumble burst from supporting artillery in the outer emplacements of Pondicherry, and a thunderstorm of cannonshot blew over the English batteries.

Clive's guns opened up with grape and canister, raking down the onrushing *tirailleurs*. The spitfire Company ensign roused the ire of certain bigwig King's Regulars, who kept under cover as much as they could and who looked down their gentlemanly noses at this ungentlemanly, irregular upstart. How dare this vulgar crow, decked in genteel feathers, presume to be a soldier!

Unlike Regular officers, who would not thus demean themselves, Mr. Clive served his pieces like a common gunner.

Clive was working his guns with spirit when ammunition ran short. Instead of detailing a corporal or a sergeant to fetch it, as a Regular officer would have done, he darted out of the advanced trench himself and scrambled back to the supply line.

"*Halloo!*" jeered one of the Regulars. "Civilians never make good soldiers. Lookye! There's Clive, running away!"

Clive returned to his battery, pulling a trundle of powder and shot.

After the sortie had been repulsed, and the enemy artillery silenced, Mr. Clive confronted his critic. Brown eyes ablaze, he snarled: "So Clive quit his post, eh? Well, here's Clive; and he's not running away. I demand immediate satisfaction, sirrah, else I shall thrash you like a dog."

The jack-a-dandy snorted haughtily. "Indeed, you shall have it, *Mister*."

Clive turned to appoint Lieutenant Dalton as his second, and the challenged officer batted Clive on the ear with a sharp backhander.

Clive swung around, whipping out his blade. "God damn you!" he said. "*En garde*, foutre!"

The officer drew at once, and they were about to cross swords when Major Lawrence's aide-de-camp (Captain Lucas) stepped between them with hands raised. "Gentlemen, consider yourselves under arrest."

A summary court of inquiry ruled in Clive's favor, ordering the officer to beg his pardon before the entire battery. Reluctant to bust him, because he was a King's Regular, the court took no notice of the injury added to insult; unwarranted assault was a serious offense. But Clive did not forgive. His wounded pride called for a drastic cure. Accepting the public apology, he then demanded personal satisfaction. When the officer scornfully refused, Clive rapped him over the head with his swaggerstick.

"Poltroon!" he said. "I should thrash you like a cur, but you're too contemptible even for that."

On the following day, the disgraced officer resigned his commission.[12]

Through his telescope, Mr. Clive could plainly see Marquis and Madame Dupleix on the ramparts of the citadel. Ján Bégam was conspicuous in a bright red sari, encouraging the troops and issuing orders while her casually dressed husband looked on. *My God,* he thought, *what an amazon!* ("I wasn't born a soldier," *M. le Gouverneur* once answered an accusation of temerity. "I keep away from cannonballs, because peace and quiet are propitious to my genius. Heaven knows, I can't pursue my meditations amid the noise of firearms!" Jokingly: "I'm a lover, not a fighter.") [13]

As fast as the English cannon breached them the walls of Pondicherry were repaired and reinforced by steadfast defenders who swore to lay down their lives for Madame Jeanne. That brave woman was to them another Jeanne d'Arc.

Robert Clive philosophized facetiously with his patron, Stringer Lawrence: 'Sir, I should like to see some Rabelais rebuild the walls of Pondicherry with human twats: with Madame Duplicity's sturdy quoin as the cornerstone, and those of her frigsome daughters in support thereof. Inasmuch as the cunts of women are cheaper than stones, of them should a wall be built. There's no material like 'em to resist blows; so who, pray tell, could breach such a wall?"

Lawrence, of Rabelaisian bent, replied: "The Old Cock!" [14]

Pondicherry proved impregnable. The French stuck to their guns, despite heavy losses, and Marquis Dupleix held his own—thanks to

[12] *Dalton Diary; Voyage to the East Indies;* Gleig, *et al.*
[13] *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses;* Martineau.
[14] *Dalton Journal.*

his Jeanne. After two months of bombardment, assault, and counter-assault, the besiegers called it quits. They had lost over a thousand men in attacks and by malarial fever, and hundreds of others (especially sepoys) had deserted. A couple of European officers had been shot dead by the panic-stricken Hindustanis whom they had tried to rally. Monsoon torrents had flooded the trenches and scattered the fleet. To make matters worse, Stringer Lawrence had been captured and thrown into Pondicherry prison with Nicholas Morse. No ransom was exacted or accepted. Clive wrote: "Maj. Lawrence, sooner than follow the Troops in their ignominious Flight, chose rather to be kill'd or taken Prisoner." Lawrence "received no Hurt in the Action," and (unlike Morse, whose nude body was spattered with filth) "met with extream good Treatment." [15]

Clive alone, in the advanced trenches, had inspired his troops by death-defying example to stick to their guns as doggedly as the French. The greatest loss of the French was their male darling, Princess Jeanne's rumored secret lover. Pâris Paradis was mortally wounded in a sortie, with bayonet thrusts in the chest and genitals. His last words were: "*Je meurs pour ma Jeanne!*" (I die for my Jeanne!) Jeanne reputedly concealed her sorrow like an accomplished adulteress. Impotent Dupleix (then only fifty-one, but *noué à l'aiguillette*) simply scratched in his private journal: "*Pauvre Paradis, comme Zimry, percé à mort au travers des parties génitales. Mérite juste!*" (Poor Paradis, like Zimri, pierced to death through the genital parts. Just deserts!) [16]

Clive noted in his fieldbook that "he [Paradis] was mortally wounded: in the Head, 'tis reported, by a random Shot. The Truth is, many of his Sepoys mutinied for want of Pay, and refused to go on. In exhorting them with the Flat of his Sword, he was assaulted by 2 Peons [native privates], who Bayonetted him in the Breast & Ballocks. Ignominious End!" In this regard, *A Manuall of Armes* (issued by "Ye Commander of ye Hon'ble Companie's Black Troopes on ye Coast of Coromandell" in 1687) states: "Two Vitall Organes, at which ye Bayonnette may be aymed with deadly Effect, are ye

[15] *Orme Papers.*

[16] *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* (According to *Numbers* 25:8, Prince Zimri was "thrust through the organs of generation" by the spear of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, while he was foully fornicating with Princess Cozbi').

Heart & Genitories." [17] Old battle prints depict opposing infantrymen bayoneting each other between the thighs: the so-called *coup des couillons* or "testicle thrust." The jab was much used by Indian troops, who reckoned they could thereby castrate and kill their opponent at one blow.

Though the siege of Pondicherry was a miserable miscarriage, one participant emerged with honor. Major Lawrence later wrote that "Ensign Clive, by his gallant Conduct, gave ye first Prognostick of that high Millitary Spirit which was ye Spring of his future Actions and ye principal Source of ye decisive Intrepidity & Ellevation of Mind which were his characteristick Endowements." [18] James Wolfe, whose martial genius rivaled that of Clive, remarked that "Few men are acquainted with the degrees of their own courage till danger has proved them." Proved by danger, Clive saw no limit to courage. Dupleix said that "God is on our side (*Dieu est pour nous*)!" Clive said, "What! can the Devil speak true? If so, then I defy the Omnipotent to arms." [19]

[17] *Rae Journal* (excerpt; original not to be located among Company Records).
[18] *Orme Papers* (quoted in Cambridge's *Account of the War in India*).
[19] Pilláí; *Voyage to the East Indies.*

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THE FORLORN HOPE

The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, ending the War of the Austrian Succession in 1748, ruined Marquis Dupleix' dream of a French India. It wrung his heart to restore Madras to the "Goddams," to release Governor Morse and Major Lawrence. But the diehard "Messire Duplicity" kept his dream and scheme. And Ján Bégam egged him on. She sent letters to "All the Princes of Coromandell, and even to the Great Mogull himself," informing them that her husband had repulsed "the most formidable Attack that had ever been made in India." He thereupon received from them "the highest Compliments

on his own Prowess, and on the Military Character of his Nation," which was now regarded throughout Hindustan as "greatly Superior to that of the English." [1] Doubtless M. Dupleix' sexual impotence (or, as the French styled it, *la chute de son braguette:* "the collapse of his codpiece") impelled him to seek such compensations.

In late spring of 1749, John Company ventured to get the jump on Joseph-François Dupleix. An ambitious military expedition was organized to reinstate the deposed Rajah of Tanjore, Sáhújí Ráo. The price was to be the strategic port-fort of Devikota (about twenty miles south of St. David) and a free hand in his affluent coastal kingdom.

"The most exquisite spot on earth!" So Edmund Burke styled Tanjore, "the most fertile part of the Coast of Coromandel." [2] Sáhújí, great-grandson of Shivají, too dissolute to rule, had been displaced by his younger brother Prataáp Singh, whose eyes were on the future instead of females. He had assumed the throne by popular demand and with French support. Unlike his Muslim contemporaries, who practiced "despotism tempered by assassination," Prataáp Singh had spared his brother's wretched life, banishing Sáhújí beyond the Coleroon River, Tanjore's northern border. This placed a useful puppet in John Company's hands. At a council of war called by Major Lawrence, Clive, promoted to full lieutenant on the first of March, advocated immediate action: "Granted, gentlemen, that our man Sahoojee hath not a friend in his own country. Granted, he be an whorehound and an *asinus ad lyram* [an ass at the lyre: a misfit]. Still, I say, Devikota is destined to be of great use to us. Neither Madras nor Fort St. David has a harbor, while the largest ships could run up the Coleroon River and anchor: there to fill their holes with untold riches. In a word, gentlemen: as Devikota should be of immense utility to us—not only commercially, but militarily as well—I say, *Let us take it while take we can!*" [3]

With eight hundred Europeans, fifteen hundred sepoys, and a battalion of siege artillery, Major Lawrence attacked Devikota. Lieutenant Clive served as the C-in-C's personal aide. The "Old Cock" had all but adopted the young bantam.

The fortress was on a commanding site between the Coleroon and

[1] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*
[2] Forrest, Sir George W.: *Life of Lord Clive.*
[3] *Voyage to the East Indies.*

Bengal Bay. It was manned by the new Rajah, Prataáp Singh, and his multitudinous but obsolete army.

Having positioned his batteries to bombard the earthen walls of the fort, Lawrence opened fire and in three days had gouged a yawning breach. Clive asked for and was granted the honor of leading the storming party, the vanguard of which numbered thirty-five British soldiers and seven hundred natives. The rest of the force was to follow as soon as he and his storm troops had penetrated the breach.

A waist-deep *jheel* (marsh) lay between them and the earthwork breasting the breach, but Clive forded it with a loss of only four men. But it was only the English redcoats who dashed after their leader. Unknown to Clive, the sepoys hung back, waiting for the main body to move forward in support.

Tanjore horsemen swarmed over the little band, hacking and slashing, and in one furious minute, all but three of Clive's band were cut down. He writes: "I myself nigh fell a Sacrifice to one of the Horsemen (who had his Sword uplifted to cut me down, which I avoided by slipping to one side) when I order'd the 4 of us to fall back." [4]

Four lone Englishmen, fighting for their lives, carved a gory path back to their entrenchment. There Lawrence's fire unsaddled over a dozen sowars and sent the rest flying.

The garrison of Devikota threw down their weapons when Lárens Sáhib and his bayonets swarmed through the breach. "As soon as we were in possession of the Ramparts," Clive recorded, "we could perceive the Enemy's Army (which was very numerous, being not less than 15 or 20,000 Men) retreating over the Plains." [5] John Company had won the prize.

This master stroke showed the Indians that the English could fight, that they were as much soldiers as shopkeepers, and that they were not *hijré*, "men without balls." The natives had always been afraid of the French—*dhakélúlóg*, "rams"—but they ordinarily dismissed the English as mere traders, pushovers for the likes of Dupleix. Clive once observed that "The Oriental regards inaction as entirely owing to fear." [6] Hence, to secure respect and ensure security, an

[4] *Orme Papers.*
[5] *Orme Papers.*
[6] Dalton.

unassuming nation of shopkeepers was obliged to abandon its dictum that "A Warr & Traffique are incompatible." The avowedly humble and honorable trading company, forced into a survival-of-the-fittest struggle with France, had now become a formidable military power.

Lest he lose his kingdom, Rájá Prataáp Singh yielded to John Company. He agreed to pay heavy indemnities, to cede Devikota and surrounding territory to the E.I.C., and to allow the "wretched" ex-rajah (in whose cause the Company was allegedly fighting) a pension of four thousand rupees a year—and as many whores as he could therewith afford—on condition that the Right Honourable Council keep him in confinement at Fort St. David. Thus, with the exception of exiled and incarcerated Sáhújí Ráo, all concerned were duly satisfied. And as for Sáhújí—well, he could subscribe to Dupleix' furious comment, "*Perfide Albion!*", but with his sights set on dancing-girls he "rubb'd his Pizzle raw with excessive violent Foutrey, till at last ye Pox carried him away." [7]

Perfide Albion! But Englishmen were only taking a leaf out of Messire Duplicity's book.

[7] *Rae Journal.*

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THE CITY OF PALACES

The Reverend Mr. Francis Fordyce, "padre" or chaplain of Fort St. David, was also a senior merchant, a heavy-pursed member of Council, and a self-appointed *censor morum.* In that exalted capacity, His Reverence presumed to censure Lieutenant Robert Clive although it was common knowledge that Mr. Fordyce had recently been forced out of Sumatra for seducing a white planter's teenage daughter.[1]

Fordyce opened with a denunciation of Mr. Clive as "an unnatural scoundrel and a coward," and followed with "Clive is an abominable

[1] *Ibid.; Dalton Journal.*

loocher [sodomite]. . . . If he doth not turn from evil, so help me God I'll break every bone in his skin." [2]

Mr. Clive warned Mr. Fordyce to guard his tongue, but Mr. Fordyce ranted on and went so far as to tail Clive like a hungry hyena. Cornering him as he was coming out of a *bacheh-kháneh* or "faghouse," he raved, "What in God's name were you doing in that den of unnatural vice?" and shook his cane in Clive's face.

Clive smirked. "Sirrah, permit me to say that I was here to swap horses," and rapped the preacher over the head with his swaggerstick.

The padre lunged with a swinging cane. Clive blocked the blows, whacking Fordyce's wrist hard enough to knock the stick out of his hand. Clive then threw down his own weapon and put up his fists.

Fordyce squared off; and were it nor for Lieutenant Dalton, Major Lawrence's orderly, a swelling crowd of jabbering and gesticulating Hindustanis would have been treated to a rough-and-tumble between the Sáhibs. It was Dalton who had introduced Clive to "ye peculiar Province of Sodomy," so he felt a personal responsibility in the matter, beside his duty as an officer to restrain a brawling colleague.[3]

The Reverend Mr. Fordyce lodged an official complaint against Lieutenant Clive. "I conceive that no part of the Laws of England can justify Mr. Rob't Clive or any other person in assaulting a Laick [layman], much less a Clergyman." [4] The Governor and Council thereupon summoned the two parties to appear before a court of inquiry. Mr. Fordyce appeared, but refused to submit to the jurisdiction of his St. David colleagues.

"I have reason to believe, sirs, that this court is prejudiced in Mr. Clive's favor—packed, if you will—and therefore pray that the Right Honourable Directors in London should adjudicate."

Fordyce's petition was denied. The hearing opened.

Clive charged: "Gentlemen, I do declare, His Reverence is a vile canting hypocrite; and by God Almighty, I'd have broke his head were it not for Mr. Dalton! Because I do not care to appear in chapel, nor yet line His Reverence's pockets, he has chosen to dog me to death. Moreover, gentlemen, this fanatic hath maligned me most viciously. I cautioned him to hold his viperous tongue, but the warn-

[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*

ing fell on deaf ears. It then became an affair of honor, and accounts were nigh to be settled when Mr. Dalton came upon the scene."

Fordyce damned Clive as a demon incarnate who had "turned Turk," and denounced the Governor and members of Council as "a Parcell of Whore-mongers, Sodomites, Macquerells, Paederasts & Polygamists." [5]

"Does Mr. Fordyce dispute our authority?" demanded one red-faced councilor.

Fordyce replied, "I shall answer no questions," and stalked out of the committee room; "which so extra-ordinary Behaviour being taken into Consideration [states the official record], the Gentlemen are Unanimously of Opinion that, as it is Evident he disputes their Authority and for his Insolent Behaviour, he is no longer Worthy to be entertain'd in the Service of the Hon'ble Company, from which it's Agreed he be Dismiss'd and that his Allowances will cease from this Day."

As for Mr. Clive, the record reports "that He is generally Esteem'd a very quiet Person, and no-ways Guilty of Disturbances." [6]

Soon after the Fordyce affair, while leaving Cuddalore in the dead of night, Lieutenant Clive was distracted by "a scandallous Commotion" in the entranceway of a whorehouse. Upon investigating, he found Ensign Hyde Parker and an orderly-sergeant—both riotously drunk—"enfillading a Black Wench between 'em."

"Join us!" Parker blurted, not recognizing his superior.

"How dare you, sirrah!" Clive replied.

That immediately sobered them; for Major Lawrence, in a discipline drive, had threatened to hang drunken and disorderly officers. So Clive kept faith with his official reputation of being "generally Esteem'd a very quiet Person, and no-ways Guilty of Disturbances." [7]

With Devikota in Company hands, all civilians in the military service were called back to their peaceful posts. The European Volunteers were now disbanded, and the E.I.C. again settled down to commercial enterprise. But not Robert Clive, who would not give up his commission for an account book.

[5] Rae; Dalton.
[6] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*
[7] Rae; Dalton.

Stringer Lawrence appreciated this attitude, and so did Governor Charles Floyer (Mr. Hinde's successor) and the members of Council. They boosted Mr. Clive (December 1, 1749) to the brevet rank of Captain and appointed him Chief Commissary of the Honourable Company's Troops on the Coast of Coromandel. Maskelyne, promoted ensign, was appointed his aide. He had just recovered from a painful contusion caused by "a Musquet-ball that nigh blew off his Genitories." [8] As Clive reported: "In the Attack upon Davycotah, Mr. Maskelyne was wounded in the Groin & owed his Life entirely to the Knot of his Sash." [9]

Action was both Clive's cure for recurrent melancholy, and his recipe for success. Anticipating the decisive struggle ahead, he criticised Mr. Floyer & Company as being "entirely attached to mercantile ideas." Peace was indispensable to the prosperity of trade, but "The prospect of a firm and lasting peace shall remain very poor while Messire Duplicity sounds the call to arms." The Governor pleaded practicality: that the late campaigns had been a severe drain on Company finances, and that the Directors were determined to reduce it. "Time will tell of their folly," Clive answered. "And when that time comes, they shall have sore need of despised prophets." [10]

The summer of 1750 found Clive close to death from a malarial fever, complicated by a symptom of dengue: *hydrocele*, swollen testicles or "Dropsy of ye Scrotum." [11] Dosed with opium and quinine he rallied, the fever broke, the swelling eased.

It was autumn, the dry season, and Clive recruited his strength with a cruise up the Bay of Bengal to Calcutta. He had long fancied to see the "City of Palaces," the metropolis of European trade in the East Indies, and convalescence offered an excuse to gratify this desire.

Calcutta was the pleasure garden of Bengal's delta. It basked in hazy splendor, caressed by voluptuous breezes and perfumed by rich verdure. For Clive, it was love at first sight.

French, Dutch, and Danish settlements dotted both banks of the muddy Hooghly; but the British flag waved over old Fort William,

[8] *Rae Medical Recordbook.*
[9] *Orme Papers.*
[10] *Dalton Journal.*
[11] *Rae Medical Recordbook.*

which sheltered the villas and bungalows of wealthy English merchants. The governor's mansion was a masterpiece of Georgian architecture framed by gardens and ponds, and opalescent palaces were mirrored in a lake rimmed by a broad esplanade. North of the fort, the native town sprawled and seethed.

But it was also a Babylon, a Sodom and Gomorrah, a sumptuous stew. Lust ran rampant through paneled drawing rooms, scented boudoirs, and terraced verandahs. Clive observed men, women, and even children living in carefree promiscuity. English husbands kept native mistresses, English wives boasted native lovers, married couples swapped mates. Adultery was only mildly tempered by duels.

Clive was content to watch. His weakened "works" were as yet unable to bear the brunt.[12]

While wintering at Calcutta, observing "fashionable" (if not "polite") society and listening to scandalous "gup," Captain Clive learned of one 'Alíverdí Khán, Neváb of Bengal, an Afghan adventurer who had taken the luxuriant land by fire and sword. He had given the Europeans "squatters' rights" in the delta. He was now grooming his spoiled grandson, Sirájuddawleh, for the role of viceroy. This boy, barely twelve years old, was already a notorious *gándú* (arser) or *pusht* (fag).[13] In this regard, an honorable member of the Calcutta Council (Mr. William Watts) scrawled in his journal: "These Mahomedans are much given to Buggery, and they abuse each other from early Boyhood, and neither Circumcision nor Allah can effectuate a Change for ye better. Yea, ye Passion is so inbred, that even their Wives be not averse to *Aversa Venus* [posterior passion]!"

The English captain from Coromandel could not have dreamed of it then, but in a few more years his life and that of the Musalman prince from Bengal would become so embroiled as to change the course of Indian (and, indeed, world) history for nearly two centuries.

[12] *Rae Journal*; *Hickey Journal*; Watts, William: *Journal*.
[13] *Ibid.*; Husayn Khán, Saiyed Ghulám: *Siyer-i-Mut'ákhirín*.

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THE MAN OF DESTINY

No sooner had John Company signed a peace treaty with the Rajah of Tanjore than there was a revolution in the Carnatic. Its first rumblings came in 1747, when Nádir Sháh was assassinated at Kandahar by his general-in-chief, Ahmed Khán Abdálí, who proclaimed himself *Sháh Durráni* or King of Afghanistan. In the following year, Ahmed Sháh disposed of Nádir's puppet Mughal (Muhammed Sháh) by a like method and installed himself on the blood-stained throne at Delhi, where he intended to rule Nádir's Persian Empire. These events precipitated a bloody power-grab free-for-all.

Asef Jáh Nizámul-Mulk was Governor General of Southern India, and a friend of the English, until poisoned at the end of '48. The Grand Mughal (Ahmed Sháh) then appointed Asef Jáh's favorite grandson, Muzaffer Jang, Nizám of the Deccan. But the most ambitious and rebellious of Asef Jáh's three sons, Násir Jang, seized the reins of government from his feeble nephew. Refused aid from "all-powerful" Ahmed Sháh, who had political troubles of his own at Delhi, Muzaffer turned to the formidable Maratha Empire of Western India. The Marathas, in the dynamic person of Chandá Sáhib, promised help—for a consideration.

Husayn Dóst Khán, nicknamed *Chandá Sáhib* (Mr. Moon) because of his handsome face and form, was a *rara avis* among Muslim rulers. Endowed with military and political genius, he was also an agnostic intellectual who understood six languages (Sanskrit, Hindustani, Persian, Arabic, French, and English) and preferred Condé the Great's *Mémoires* to the Holy Prophet's Qurán. A son-in-law and cousin of Dóst 'Alí Khán, the second Carnatic Neváb appointed by Nizám Asef Jáh, Chandá Sáhib was awarded, as a wedding gift, the governorship of Trichinopoly, the "Gibraltar of India," a formidable frontier stronghold near Tanjore.

In 1740, Murárí Ráo and a Maratha horde overran and ravaged the Carnatic. According to the Hindu chronicler Ánandaranga Pilláí, "They looted towns and villages, raped many women and children, tortured the menfolk, and committed numerous other outrages." They even demanded tribute (*chawth*) from the French at Pondicherry. When refused by Gouverneur Benoît Dumas, Dupleix' predecessor, Murárí Ráo and his freebooters sacked the town. "Everyone there was seized and stripped stark-naked. Some of the Europeans received swordcuts; others were scourged with whips. Women and children were openly debauched, and those not abused were taken as slaves." [1] Neváb Dóst 'Alí Khán, killed in battle with the fierce Sons of Shivají, was succeeded (having sired no sons) by his eldest son-in-law, Safder 'Alí Khán. Despairing of any aid from either the Grand Mughal or the Nizám of South India, Neváb Safder bought off the Marathas with a disgraceful sacrifice. He offered Murárí Ráo the strategic territory of Trichinopoly, which he had given to his brother-in-law, Chandá Sáhib.

Taken by surprise, Chandá was unprepared to stand siege. His rock-fortress was virtually impregnable, but the food supply was short. "We can't get in," the Maratha chief wrote to the Musalman lord, "but you can't get out; so your bellies must decide the issue," [2] and Chandá Sáhib surrendered under threat of starvation. Unaware that he was the victim of Neváb Safder's dirty deal, Chandá was sent a prisoner to the Maratha capital at Satara in 1741.

Safder 'Alí suffered for his treachery. He was stabbed to death by Murtezá 'Alí Khán, Governor of Vellore (sister-city of Arcot), who then proclaimed himself Neváb of the Carnatic. In angry dismay at this flagrant usurpation, Nizám Asef Jáh sent his eldest son and generalissimo (Mír Gházíyuddín Khán) to oust the pretender and scourge him with scorpions. "I have seen a dozen viceroys in a country where there should be but one. Behead the next bastard [*herámzádeh*, whoreson] who professes that title!" [3]

Murtezá 'Alí fled to Vellore, in the dead of night, disguised as a wealthy female prostitute traveling in a palanquin. Muslim chronicler Tevallá Hámid cites a scandalous report that he was detained en

[1] Pilláí.
[2] Hámid.
[3] *Ibid.*

route by a ten-man patrol of Gházíyuddín's cavalry, who sodomized him as a *mukhannes* (limpo, dangler) or transvestite fairy. Not realizing his identity, they released him after repeated abuse; whereupon Murtezá went into hiding like a wounded animal.

Because Safder's only son was too young for the governorship, Mír Gházíyuddín assumed full authority in the Carnatic until poisoned by one of his flunkies, Anveruddín Khán, who immediately disposed of the remaining obstacle, Safder's adolescent scion, Muhammed Se'íd, by the daggers of hired assassins. Thus, after three murders and continuous intrigue, Anveruddín Khán Behádur rose from obscurity to become ruler (1744) when England and France declared war in the Carnatic. The Nizám, without an army, was powerless to oppose him; albeit he commanded Anveruddín's allegiance by holding the threat of Emperor Nádir Sháh over his head.

Meanwhile, Chandá Sáhib languished in a Maratha prison; and Neváb Anveruddín paid to have him kept there. Having given the governorship of Trichinopoly to his youngest son (Muhammed 'Alí) when Murárí Ráo abandoned the plundered district, he feared the return of a popular and influential man who might claim power as kinsman of the late-lamented Neváb Dóst 'Alí.

Then came a letter to Arcot that sealed Anveruddín's doom. It was from Bálájí Ráo Péshvá, King of the Maratha Confederacy, and it stated: "Since we have seen fit to restore to you the fortified town of Trichinopoly, it behooves us to increase the price you deign to pay for Chandá Sáhib's perpetual imprisonment." [4]

When Anveruddín refused to fork over a rupee more, Bálájí Ráo offered Chandá's release to the highest bidder. It was the beginning of 1749. Nizám Asef Jáh was dead; and Násir Jang, his rebellious son, had robbed grandson Muzaffer Jang of authorized accession. Learning of Bálájí Ráo's offer to free Chandá Sáhib at auction, Muzaffer wrote to the captive: "Anveruddín has made a fatal mistake, for which I (and indeed you!) must thank Allah. I will attempt to secure your release; and Allah willing, with the help of the powerful English, we shall drive Anveruddín and Násir out of the Deccan and assume our rightful authority there." [5]

In the spring of '49, Muzaffer Jang applied to the English for mili-

[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*

tary assistance. The English, already committed to the cause of the deposed and debauched potentate of Tanjore (Sáhújí Ráo), denied him help. Besides, they saw no commercial advantage in ousting Anveruddín and Násir. That was too imperialistic for their *then* mercantile interests. But, as Clive predicted, this put winning cards into the hands of Dupleix. Muzaffer wanted the Deccan, and Chandá wanted the Carnatic; and if Muzaffer would ransom Chandá from the Marathas, Chandá would invite the French to help them get what they wanted.

Muzaffer had no money, but Dupleix did, and was pleased to spend it in that manner. Marquis Dupleix, taking Madame's advice, ransomed Chandá Sáhib for 700,000 rupees. It was a high price, but it promised to give substance to his haunting dream of a French India. Now he and Jeanne could resume *le grand jeu* (the great game) as they laughingly called it.

Armed with French money and promises, Muzaffer Jang and Chandá Sáhib raised an army of forty thousand Hindustanis. In July, spearheaded by four hundred French regulars and two thousand sepoys commanded by Dupleix' brother-in-law, Colonel d'Auteuil, they marched against the Carnatic Neváb. Anveruddín Khán was crushed and killed and his eldest son, Mehfúz 'Alí, was captured. The Neváb's bastard scion, Muhammed 'Alí, bolted at the beginning of the fight and made tracks to his towering stronghold, the rock-fortress of Trichinopoly. Arcot, capital of the Carnatic, surrendered at once.

Though Uncle Násir Jang still sat firmly in the seat of usurpation at Hyderabad, Muzaffer Jang proclaimed himself Nizám of the Deccan (Viceroy of South India) and appointed Chandá Sáhib as his Neváb of the Carnatic or Coromandel Coast region. The two conquerors then became Messire Duplicity's honored guests at Pondicherry, where they awarded him the sovereignty of eighty-one villages adjoining the French territory.

Vivat! Balance of power was now tilted in favor of *La Compagnie des Indes Orientales*. John Company may have gained a strategic port by its diversion at Devikota; but Messire Duplicity, by one bold stroke, had gained political influence over all of South India. English merchants dispatched the staggering news to their Court of Directors: "The French have struck at the Ruination of our Settlements,

possess'd themselves of several large Districts, planted their Colours on the very Edge of our Bounds, and are endeavouring to surround our Settlements in such a manner as to prevent either Provisions or Merchandize being brought to us." [6]

This dispatch was soon followed, in September, by another of graver import:

> *In spite of the Peace, Affairs are more embroil'd than even during the War, owing to the Artifices of Dupleix, who so hates the English as to be unable to refrain from under-hand Acts of Hostility. . . . We are surrounded in such a manner as for the French to have it entirely in their Power to stop our Trade or debar us from any Supplys of Provision from the Country; and we have great reason to believe, from what has allready happen'd, they will not be wanting to make use of this Advantage.*[7]

Governor Charles Floyer, bigwig of Fort St. David, shivered in his shoes. He sent official recognition to Chandá Sáhib, acknowledging him as the new Nevàb, lest the Sword of Damocles drop. Captain Clive voiced an opinion to Dr. Rae: "Damned white-livered fool! However much we kiss Chundah's arse, he'll nonetheless fart in our faces. He's a precious tool in the hands of Dupleix." [8]

Muhammed 'Alí Khán, holed up at Trichinopoly, sent word to Governor Floyer that he could reconquer the Carnatic if the English would lend him their support—"for your own interest and advantage, if it please Allah." [9] Major Lawrence and Captain Clive urged Mr. Floyer to accept the offer, "since Chundah Saib is a mere Puppet on French Strings." [10]

But timid Floyer, asked to play a desperate game, did no more than hustle off a hundred men under Captain James Cope to reinforce Muhammed 'Alí's imperiled garrison at Trichinopoly, about ninety miles southwest of St. David. The English then negotiated with Nizám Násir Jang, Muzaffer's rival relative, pledging him six hundred soldiers to support his domination of the Deccan and Muhammed 'Alí's takeover in the Carnatic.

[6] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Rae Journal.*
[9] Hámid.
[10] *Dalton Journal.*

By supporting the lost cause of Sáhújí Ráo, and subsequently forming an anti-French alliance with Prataáp Singh, John Company had set an example of *actively* exploiting the civil wars of native rulers. Though actuated by commercial motives, it thereby justified the imperialistic aspirations of M. Dupleix and provoked his countermove against Anveruddín. According to one sagacious observer,

> *two enlighten'd European Nations wasted their Ingenuity in Volumes of Political Controversy, rendering Homage to Virtue and Justice in respectively claiming the Reputation of supporting the rightfull Cause, but adding to the numerous Examples of Failure in attempting to reconcile the discordant Elements of Politicks and Morals without daring to avow the plain and barbarous Truth: that the whole was a Trial of Strength among Bands of foreign Usurpers [the Mughals], in which the English and French had as much right to be Principals as any one of the Pageants whom they supported. But these Nations [France and England] were at Peace, and they could only appear in the Contest as the mercenary Troops of these polish'd Barbarians.*[11]

In February of 1750, Chandá Sáhib and Muzaffer Jang, with a 2,000-man French contingent, attacked Násir Jang's horde at Valdore, a short distance west of Pondicherry. Certain of success, the usurper had appointed Muhammed 'Alí to succeed his father (Anveruddín) as Nevá̀b of the Carnatic and assured the English that he would banish Dupleix from the Deccan.

The "battle" was a disaster. Before the first volley could be fired by either side, the demoralized French troops, who had not received their pay, mutinied, and the natives, panic-stricken by the desertion of their auxiliaries, fled back in disorderly rout to Pondicherry. Chandá Sáhib ran with them. Muzaffer Jang, taken by surprise, found himself at the mercy of his uncle.

Nizám Násir, victorious by a fluke, now gave John Company the cold shoulder. All his sworn pledges of freehold territory around Madras and Fort St. David were ignored. Stringer Lawrence withdrew his six hundred troops in disgust, and a hands-off policy was again in force.

11 *Wilks MSS.* (quoted in his *Historical Sketches of South India*).

Násir Jang resumed his boozing and lechering. His upstart nephew in a dungeon, his would-be opponents scattered to the winds, what did he have to worry about? Allah was on his side! But was Messire Duplicity? Chandá assured Dupleix: "Násir has the artillery wherewith to conquer dancing-girls. His prowess is in his prick (*Dilírish kírishtú*)." Dupleix thereafter referred to Násir as "that conqueror of whores" (*vainqueur des putains*).[12]

Though naked in chains, the Nizám's nearest and dearest enemy was making many "friends" among his uncle's stooges. Fair, full-buttocked, in the flower of effeminate youth, Muzaffer Jang prostituted his sex appeal. A plot was soon hatched against cock-a-hoop Násir, a plot nurtured by Dupleix' bribes and Muzaffer's favors.

Ján Bégam, the go-between in this conspiracy, released Mehfúz 'Alí and sent him as an envoy of peace to Násir Jang. Suspicions were thus allayed. Mehfúz assured Násir that the French (if not Chandá) were friendly. Jeanne then threw a sop to and conspired with one Shehnáneváz Khvájeh, a Negro eunuch, the Nizám's general-in-chief. "He loves Násir like the tiger loves the gazelle," she was told, and acted accordingly. The plot was strengthened by the eunuch-general's perverse affection for the depraved prisoner.

December, 1750. A column of six hundred French regulars, two thousand sepoys, and ten guns pounced upon Násir Jang's twenty-five thousand warriors in the dead of night. Roused from a drunken stupor, the Nizám dragged his nude nephew out of the Valdore dungeon and chained him to his elephant's left rear foot. He wanted him to witness the decisive defeat of the "uncircumcised swine."

But to Násir's dismay, all his braves ran away. *Máshálláh:* What has God willed! Turning to his hatchetman, the Nizám pointed down at Muzaffer and snarled: "Chop off his head!" The executioner swung his axe, but not at Muzaffer. Nizám Násir Jang's skull was split like a melon and his corpse heaved out of the howdah to be riddled with bullets. The unchained Muzaffer Jang urinated on the mangled remains of his uncle. "The conspirators," writes a native witness, "cutting off Násir's broken head, fixed it on the point of a spear and flaunted it as evidence of complete success."[13] Mehfúz 'Alí Khán, who had been seated beside Násir, leaping in terror from the elephant,

[12] Pillái; Hámid.
[13] *Ibid.*

was trampled to death by Shehnáneváz' cavalry. His head was cut off and sent to brother Muhammed 'Alí.[14]

The conspiracy had succeeded. Muzaffer Jang Behádur was again saluted as Nizám of the Deccan, Chandá Sáhib Behádur assumed full authority as Neváb of the Carnatic, and Dupleix was proclaimed *vezír-i-'ázem:* deputy-in-chief or Grand Vizier of Southern India. Ján Bégam did not begrudge him the title; he could have the glory, so long as she wielded the power.

Two days after Christmas, the two paraded through the streets of Pondicherry in barbaric splendor: a gold-plated, pearl-studded palanquin. Arrayed in the same *khil'at* or diamond-embroidered silk robe of honor that 'Aurangzeyb had given Asef Jáh, Joseph-François Dupleix, premier of the Deccan, was Islamically entitled *Zafer Jang Behádur* (Valiant and Victorious Warlord), commissioned *mansebdár* or "commander of ten thousand horse" in the Mughal Army, and bestowed a *nazr* or ceremonial gift of a hundred thousand rupees. His mind teeming with fresh schemes, his breast gleaming with Mughal flashery, Marquis Dupleix also accepted in behalf of the *Compagnie* a *jágír* or freehold land grant that covered the entire Coromandel Coast. *Triomphe!*

But Muzaffer Jang was soon disposed of. He was being escorted to his seat of state at Hyderabad when, at an appointed signal, the chiefs who had plotted against whoremaster Násir Jang betrayed his homosexual successor. Muzaffer Jang was lanced to death—through the head, chest, stomach, and genitals—as he lolled in his palanquin.[15]

Trouble-shooting Colonel Charles-Jean Patissier, Comte de Bussy-Castelnau, acting under secret orders from Dupleix, pushed on to Arcot and unshackled a political prisoner, Selábat Jang. The third and youngest son of Asef Jáh, he had been confined for damning brother Násir's overthrow of nephew Muzaffer, with whom he had been politically and sexually linked.[16]

Marquis Dupleix proclaimed Selábat Jang the new Nizám of the Deccan by right of birth, and himself the first European Neváb of the Carnatic, demoting Chandá Sáhib to the post of chief deputy. On the spot stained by Násir's blood, the French dictator had a

[14] 'Alí Khán, Mír Ghulám: *Serv-i-Azád; Mu'ásir-i-'Umr.*
[15] *Ibid.;* 'Alí Khán; *Mu'ásir-i-'Umr.*
[16] Hámid.

monument erected to commemorate his initial *coup d'état*. It was a bronze pillar, inscribed in Tamil, Persian, Sanskrit, and French vaunting the "glories" of Messire Duplicity; and the town that sprang up around it was henceforth to be known as *Dúpléks-Fatehábád*, the Place of Dupleix' Victory.

All South India was now in his clutches. All, that is, save the sister-strongholds of Tanjore and Trichinopoly, where a Hindu *Rájá* and a Muslim *Khán* sat tight.

Fate leads the willing, drags the unwilling. Charles Floyer was recalled for inaction, and Thomas Saunders took his place. Floyer, an inveterate gambler and wencher, was "entirely attached to mercantile ideas." Besides, he was "riddled with Pox, from ye frequenting of filthy Whores." [17] His successor was "a cold, austere & silent Man"—"the Man I should dread as an Enemy," noted one observer.[18] Saunders, like the fretful Company stockholders, gave no credit to a do-nothing policy. Watching and waiting had lost the E.I.C. power and prestige.

"'Tis well to lie fallow for a while," said Robert Clive, "but not till we're choked out by foul weeds! To do nothing is to be nothing." [19]

Dupleix' Hindu aide, Pandit Ánandaranga Pillái, penned in his diary: "Just as a worm will raise its head and dance when it sees a cobra dancing, so the English (their hearts burning with jealousy of the French) have attempted to conquer their enemies and acquire territory. But who can get what he wants by mere force of desire? He alone succeeds whose destiny it is, and whose hand is marked with the line of victory." Pillái was writing of Dupleix, to whom Destiny had been generous. But the hand marked with the line of victory was Clive's.

Trichinopoly, bulwark of British interests in the Deccan, was under siege by Chandá Sáhib's mercenaries. Dupleix' lackey was bent on starving Muhammed 'Alí out. If he succeeded, E.I.C. influence in "French India" would be reduced to its last outpost in Tanjore,

[17] *Rae Journal.*
[18] Orme, Robert: *Journal.*
[19] *Dalton Journal.*

which could not be trusted. Governor Saunders answered Muhammed 'Alí's desperate call for help with the assurance that, Allah willing, he would soon be relieved by all of the Company's strength.

Major Lawrence being on sick leave in England the troops were put under the command of Captain Johann Rudolf de Gingens, a Swiss hireling, whom Clive considered "an unfortunate Wretch." [20]

In January of 1751, Gingens and Cope made an abortive attempt to relieve Trichinopoly and the cause of England in India seemed all but lost. Marquis Dupleix planted the white-and-gold Fleur-de-Lis, symbol of French supremacy, within sight of Fort St. David.

Clive was now serving his seventh year in Hindustan. His rank as commissariat chief enabled him to develop and perfect those powers of organization and administration which were to establish, for better or worse, the British Raj. Still on the civil list, in September of 1750 he was appointed chief factor of St. David at £15 a year. In May of '51 he was promoted to junior merchant, salaried at £30 per annum, and privileged to trade privately: *carte blanche!* Keen on making a quick fortune, he teamed up with one Robert Orme in Calcutta, who was to write the first detailed history of "British India." Their enterprise (*Orme & Clive, Incorp.*) plied a profitable trade between Bengal and Tanjore. Captain Clive also filled his purse with commissariat contracts. An estimate of his "quick fortune" falls into the independently rich range of £40,000: enough to earn him the title of "nabob," plutocrat, back home.

"But trade," he remarked, "is a study very foreign from a soldier." [21] Having proved himself as a trader and gained wealth, the man of action dropped the pen and took up the sword.

[20] *Ibid.*
[21] *Orme Journal.*

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THE TOUR DE FORCE

May, 1751. Attempting a comeback, John Company launched into the field an expedition of five hundred English troops, eleven hundred sepoys, and eight guns under the command of Captain Gingens. Captain Clive joined the column as chief commissary and C.O. of the transport train of elephants, camels, and oxen. It was "civilian duty," but at least it was on the road to adventure. Ensign Maskelyne served as his adjutant.

Reinforced by four thousand of Muhammed 'Alí's Hindustanis and a hundred of Captain Cope's Europeans from Trichinopoly, Gingens mounted an attack upon the mighty rock-fortress of Valconda, which Chandá Sáhib held with nearly twenty thousand troops.

"Your tactics are preposterous!" Clive vainly assailed his superior for obvious incompetence. "We cannot possibly take the place in the asinine manner you propose." [1]

Gingens was a bullheaded bungler, "of an unfortunately jealous Temper which made him mistrust the Good Will of any who offer'd to give him Advice," and his impracticable plans went awry.[2] The English regulars, five hundred raw recruits whom Gingens had foolishly placed in advance for their "baptism of fire," broke and ran. Clive writes: "This Repulse, as I expected, flung All the Troops into Disorder. Dalton & myself endeavour'd to rally them, but in vain." [3] For this inexcusable blunder, Gingens was obliged to beat an inglorious retreat to Trichinopoly, where he was immediately bottled up by a French force under Colonel-Chevalier Jacques-François Law.

Captain Gingens could not even maneuver an orderly withdrawal. All his supplies fell into enemy hands. So it cannot be said that

[1] *Dalton Journal.*
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Clive Fieldbook.*

Muhammed 'Alí, starved nigh to surrender, welcomed him with open arms.

Unknown to Clive, Maskelyne was taken prisoner during the disorderly retreat. What befell him is laconically recorded in Colonel Law's journal: "*Un Anglays, M. Masquelyn, est tombé entre les mayns des troupes de Tchenda Saheb & on m'a dit d'eux a été maltrayté vilement & a été circoncys de force. Pauvre diable! Il sera mettré à rançon.*" (An Englishman, Mr. Maskelyne, has fallen into the hands of Chandá Sáhib's men and I am told was vilely abused by them and forcibly circumcised. Poor devil! He will be held to ransom.)

Not officially at war with the English, the chivalrous French commander thought better of the ransom idea and persuaded his Indian confederate to set "the poor devil" free. Maskelyne, stark-naked save for a bandage tied around his mutilated *membrum*, walked all the way back to St. David like an Islamized Hindu gymnosophist. But his ordeal earned him a lieutenant's commission.[4]

John Rae notes in his medical recordbook (July, 1751): "Re-dress'd ye Penis of Mr. Edm'd Maskelyne, brutally circumcized by ye Moors; also treated ye Anus of same for a peculiar Soreness doubtless occasion'd by Unnatural Abuse, and ye Skin & Feet for Afflictions occasion'd by walking thro' ye Jungle. Subject in Nervous Trauma: Heat Prostration, Pain & Hunger."

At a council meeting held on July 22, 1751, the Governor-President of Fort St. David and Cuddalore, Mr. Thomas Saunders, acquainted the board

> *that Lieut. Maskelyne, who came in from the Enemy's Camp a few Days ago, gives an Account that Capt. de Gingens and our Troops suffer'd a Repulse at Valcondah and have retreated across the Coleroon towards Trichinopoly, whither the Enemy have follow'd them and encampt on the Banks; that he (Lieut. Maskelyne) was surrounded by a Party of the Enemy's Horse, and was obliged to surrender; that he was carried Prisoner to Chundah Saib, who gave him Leave to come here on his Parole, but not till he had been so advized by M. Law; and that, while a Prisoner, he was forced* [sexually abused] *by the Moors and circumcized against his Will. The Presi-*

[4] *Rae Journal; Dalton Journal.*

> *dent further informs the Board that Lieut. Maskelyne's Statement with regard to the Repulse of our Troops is in compleat Accord with that made by Capt. Clive, who arrived here soon after the Misfortune. Capt. de Gingens writes that the Reasons for his Retreat towards Trichinopoly were the Want of Provisions and his Apprehensions that the Nabob's [Muhammed 'Ali's] People would leave us.*[5]

To which Captain Clive responded: "Praise God for Gingens: still conquering, still retreating!" [6] Saunders used that phrase in his official report to the London bigwigs, exhorting them to send more men and money. For such was John Company: *still conquering, still retreating.*

Cope being with Gingens, there were no chief military officers left at Fort St. David. Clive was now in command. He penned to Uncle Dan: "Had I been allow'd to carry on Trade a few Years earlier, I should have refused ever to become a Soldier; but now that I am a Soldier, I must always be one." [7]

Mr. George Pigot, a young and energetic member of Council, volunteered to accompany Captain Clive on a perilous venture. It was mid-July when the two daring men set forth with a large convoy of supplies escorted by eighty redcoats and three hundred sepoys. Destination: *Trichinopoly*. Objective: *reinforcement.*

Lieutenant Maskelyne, much as he wanted to, could not accompany them on this vital mission. With sore feet, sore penis, and sore anus, he had need to recuperate after his unpleasant experience, about which Clive twitted him ere departure: "This time I see you didn't escape with a whole skin!" [8] Rae adds: "Welcoming poor M. to ye 'Clip-cock Club,' 'What need I say,' C. observes rather crossly, 'even Pill-cocks can not save their Bacon in this devillish Country!' "

They slogged a hundred blistering miles through hostile territory to the Cauvery River, without incident. There, at midnight, the convoy crossed safely into Trichinopoly. Mission accomplished, Clive and Pigot turned back with a mounted escort of twelve sepoys.

The plains were like a blast furnace by day, so they traveled in the cool hours of darkness. But ghouls and evil jinn—and Poligars—

[5] *Wilks MSS.* (*Maskelyne Papers*). (The copy of this report in *Fort St. David MS. Records* omits mention of Maskelyne's sodomization and circumcision.)

[6] Pigot, George: *Letters.*

[7] *Clive Papers.*

[8] *Rae Journal.*

prowled at night. The Poligars were robber barons who plagued the highways and byways of the Carnatic.

The small band of Englishmen and Indians was waylaid by these Freebooters with whom they engaged in a running fight for several miles. Were it not for the black of night, all fourteen might have provided corpses for the buzzards to pick come daybreak. As it was, seven sowars were shot out of their saddles, but Clive and Pigot galloped into Fort St. David without a scratch. Three of the five natives who escaped with their lives were badly wounded.

The fate of England in India still hung by a thread. Had Clive been killed, Atropos may have snipped that tenuous strand.

Having skinned through the last exploit, Captain Clive again tempted Providence. He called on Mr. Saunders to let him court—nay, defy—danger for the salvation of John Company; and the Governor shrugged and said: "What have we to lose? I give you a free hand to act in our behalf, at your own discretion or indiscretion." [9]

Carte blanche! Clive was beside himself with sanguine expectation. He scudded down the coast to Devikota, where Captain Clarke headed a small garrison of occupation troops. Assuming command, with Clarke as his aide, Captain Clive marched southwest eighty miles up the Coleroon River with a supply train and task force of a hundred redcoats, fifty sepoys, and one light fieldpiece.

Building bamboo rafts, "Daredevil Bob" and his "lost band" crossed the Coleroon, then the Cauvery, into Trichinopoly. It was a desperate undertaking, but its very recklessness and audacity made it miraculously safe almost every step of the way. Snipers and bushwhackers had annoyed them now and then, and a French reception committee peppered them at the Cauvery, but they squeezed through without a loss.

Clive promptly surveyed the situation and satisfied himself that Trichinopoly could hold out indefinitely, against any odds, as long as its defenders had the wherewithal to fill their bellies and muskets. He brought them that wherewithal, as before. Convinced that Chandá Sáhib and Colonel Law were content to play a waiting game, Captain Clive made up his mind to take a leap in the dark. He had gambled before, and won, and he would gamble again.

[9] *Pigot Letters.*

Clive did not reveal his brainstorm to the besieged, lest it somehow leak out to the besiegers. According to Captain John Dalton, "Disagreement & Cabals among the Officers (the usual Consequence of Bad Success)" had lowered the morale of the garrison, "and never was a more unhappy Set of People got together, nor from whom less Good could be expected." To make matters worse, "the English Battalion doth not exceed 600 Men; whereas the French have 900, and the Troops of Chundah Saib out-number the Nabob's ten to one."

"Stand fast," Clive said to Gingens and Cope. "I go to seek a great Perhaps." [10] He then turned to a woebegone Muhammed 'Alí: "Allah is with those who persevere."

Clive left Trichinopoly alone, in his old disguise, under cover of darkness. "Death watches like a tiger, to seize us unawares" were Muhammed 'Alí's parting words of caution; but the young Sáhib had laughingly replied, "Throw fear to the wind! *Kuch dar na'ín hay*: There an't no sich thing." [11]

> *Tho' I should stumble in a full career,*
> *Yet rashness is a better fault than fear.*

Robert Clive plodded into Fort St. David in a torrential August downpour. Though soaked to the skin he sloshed straight for Garden House, the governor's opalescent mansion.

He stomped into the marbled council hall, leaving a trail of water behind him. "Gentlemen! Dry clothes, if you please!"

"By Jove, 'tis Clive!" said George Pigot. "Stab me, but we gave you up for dead!"

Clive dropped his soggy turban to the floor, then peeled off his sopping-wet shirt and pajamas. Stripped to the buff, he clapped his hands and called to one of the footboys: "*Libás láo, jaldí-jaldí!*" (Bring clothes, quick-quick!) He repelled the attempt of one of the governor's body servants to towel him off,

> *doubtless fearing ye Friction should arouse his prodigall Senses; for he did Handily* [by hand?] *cover ye Nudity of his Privy Parts till ye Head Bearer hurry-scurried in with dry Cloathes. "Thy Modesty's a*

[10] *Je m'en vais chercher un grand Peut-être* (Rabelais).
[11] Dalton (original orthography: *Kooch dhur naeen hye*).

Candle to thy Merit." [12] *But is it so? when other Men be not ashamed to bare their Bodies, Greek-like, in ye presence of other Men; nor Circumcision that uncommon & despized, as in classique Greece, therefore to be hid. Nay, he hath Cause to be ashamed that possesses such an Instrument of Lust: a Pudendum that perchance defiled ye very Menials who attended his Person.*

Thomas Saunders asked: "How goes it at Trichinopoly?"
Clive answered,

Desperate poor. We haven't men enough to raise the siege; and the more reinforcements we send, the more they've got to feed. 'Tis a damned deadlock all round. Chundah can't get in, Gingens can't get out, and we're reduced to a skeleton. Bah! The history of John Company has for the past six years been a history of defeat and disgrace. We've been outfought and outwitted, and we've made a botch of everything we put our hands to. That, gentlemen, is why I'm come here: to lay before you a plan to extricate us from our difficulties. As I see it, gentlemen, the only possible way of relieving Trichinopoly is to attack Arcot.

"Attack Arcot!" Saunders blurted. The others muttered and stirred in disbelief.

Captain Clive's daring plan to effect a diversion by an expedition against Arcot was then laid before the Governor and Council in fullest detail. It was "neck or nothing," but the responsibility still rested on Thomas Saunders' shoulders. He was asked to hurl every last man in Forts St. George and St. David at the Carnatic capital, and he was asked to run this fateful risk by a twenty-five-year-old "rantipole," who would take command. If the feint were a fiasco, John Company's doom was sealed. But its days were also numbered if nothing was done. So Mr. Saunders did what was expected of him. With the Council's unanimous support, he agreed to stake the fortunes of England in India on Robert Clive.

Clive later said to Pigot: "Old Sandy is good enough to feel some confidence in my capacity; and by God, I shan't disappoint him. Arcot has been left vulnerable by Chundah Saib's investment of Trichinopoly. By going at the nest when the hornets are out, we

[12] *Rae Journal* (quotation from Fielding).

snatch a great rallying point and throw the enemy into confusion. Wounded pride will draw 'em away from Trichinopoly, and *that* should strike a balance." [13]

On August 19, 1751, "The Board, being of Opinion that a Diversion in the Arcot Country will oblige the Enemy to withdraw part of their Forces from Trichinopoly and put it in our Power to attempt some thing that way, now agree that Captain Clive be sent with a Party of all the Europeans we can possibly spare and some Sepoys for this purpose." [14]

Stringer Lawrence, learning of his protégé's plan, wrote from London to Nicholas Morse at Madras: "This Millitary Genius is too well-knowne to us, and too much dreaded by ye Enemy, not to let us expect that if he goes to Arcott, Matters must be concluded Immediately." [15] But Saunders, who looked upon Clive as more of a freak than a genius, simply stated in a dispatch to the Company Directors: "The Weakness of the Moors [i.e., disunity] is now known, and 'tis certain any European Nation resolved to war on them with a tollerable Force may over-run the whole Country." [16]

[13] *Pigot Letters.*
[14] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*
[15] *Orme Papers.*
[16] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*

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THE SIEGE

On the morning of September 6, 1751, Captain Robert Clive marched southwestward out of Fort St. George. Having rounded up well-nigh every able-bodied man at Fort St. David, he had taken ship to Madras, where these volunteers and regulars were joined by all that Governor Morse could spare. St. David was now garrisoned by a hundred raw recruits, St. George by only fifty.

Most Europeans in the Honourable Company's military service were enlisted while in a pot-valiant fettle. Others were shanghai'd,

the E.I.C. was that desperate for "cannon-fodder." Two hundred of these "jolly sojers," and six hundred Hindu and Muslim sepoys, slogged with Clive to his rendezvous with destiny. Three howitzers complemented the meager foot force.

"Slope arms!—*Kandhá par bandúq rakho!*" the officers barked, brandishing their swords. "Quick march!—*Ágé jaldí chalo!*" The red-coated column rolled forward, fifes and drums throbbing a familiar tune:

Some talk of Alexander
and some of Hercules,
Of Hector and Lysander
and such great names as these;
But of all the world's brave heroes
there's none that can compare,
With a tow-row-row-row-row-row,
to the British Grenadier!
Those heroes of antiquity
never saw a cannonball,
Nor knew the force of powder
to scare their foes withal!

In the morning of the ninth, the expedition reached Conjeeveram on the Palar River, about forty-five miles southwest of Madras. Arcot lay some thirty miles west-northwest, on the south bank of the Palar.

Spies flitted into camp. Clive Sáhib welcomed them one by one in his tent. Their information was alike, without the usual Oriental exaggeration. He had picked his *jasooses* well. Arcot, fortified capital of the Carnatic, was defended by over a thousand warriors.

Captain Clive called a council of war. "Gentlemen," he said, "we're outnumbered by two to one; and albeit the defenses are not so impregnable as to resist an attack by heavy guns, yet they are apt of being defended against any force not so provided. Well, 'tis all the same to me. By God, I say we go on!" [1]

The other officers agreed.

Clive hustled off a runner to Fort St. George, begging that two 18-pounders be sent after him; and then, without awaiting their arrival, he marched onward against Arcot.

September 11. A crashing shock rent the air and shook the dark-

[1] *Rae Journal.*

ened earth. They were caught in a hurricane. Clive's emotions were stirred by the rage of nature, which only spurred him on.

"*Á'í! á'í!*" screamed the terrified sepoys and campfollowers. "*Khudá hamén márégá!*" (God will destroy us!) But Clive, rushing among them, shouted "*Chalo! chalo!*" (March! March!) and damned superstition with his fearless example, encouraging them to press on as if the devil himself drove them.[2]

On the morning of the twelfth he stood before the citadel, bathed in blazing sunlight. When they beheld this defiant band that had marched through a hurricane, challenging the wrath of Allah, the thousand-man garrison was struck with awe and panic. Here surely were demons who had stared down Satan himself.

"*Góré shaytání áté hayn!*" (White devils are coming!) the defenders of Arcot howled in dismay. "They defy the wrath of Allah! '*Yáznbilláh:* God protect us!" [3]

They abandoned the fort and everything in it, fled the city, and praised Allah for salvation. Clive and his handful of troops paraded into Arcot without firing a shot.

By publishing a general order that "All Soldiers & Sepoys caught in ye Act of Plunder, or found Guilty of insulting ye Citizenry of Arcot, shall be hang'd," Clive won the passive support of a native populace "whose Looks betray'd them Traytors, notwithstanding their pretended Friendship & dirty Presents." [4]

This traditional Oriental custom of lavishing gifts on the victor was a new experience for Clive. He took the gifts by right of conquest, lest the givers think him a damned fool masquerading as a conqueror. Thus he learned a fateful lesson in "barbarian Politicks": that to accept presents was not immoral, but hospitable, so long as these presents were not clearly stipulated (though perhaps intended) as bribes. That face-saving custom of offering and accepting tribute as gifts had gone the way of feudalism in Europe; but Europeans complied with it in India, accepting the risk of forfeiting "gentlemanly honour." Clive was no exception. But, when in Rome. . . . That was the expedient, if not justifying, attitude. The French had used it; now it was the Englishman's turn.

[2] *Ibid.* (Rae's orthography: *Choodah hummaen maraeguah.*)
[3] Hámid; *Mu'ásir-i-'Umr.*
[4] *Siege & Defence of Arcott, by a Serjeant; Rae Journal.*

Thomas Saunders saw nothing extraordinary in this stroke of luck, nor in the townspeople's generosity. Fearful of spoiling Mr. Clive, or of allowing him to rest on his laurels, the prosaic Governor penned: "'Tis nothing extra-ordinary when You consider that these People were entirely in your Power." [5]

Having taken Arcot, Clive intended to keep it; so he readied the fort to stand a long siege. Storehouses were packed with provisions, and eight big guns and an abundance of ammunition set his mind at ease. Dr. Rae, who accompanied the expedition as surgeon-in-chief, states that "Mr. C. impress'd All ye best Whores of ye City, both Male & Female to ye Number of 200, for ye Use of his Troops: picking out only ye very finest for himself & Officers, which provident Good Work hath won him ye Esteem of every lusty Cock, for that Esprit-de-Corps be now insured, and ye Apprehensions of a Doctor that hath long-since wearied of treating Clap & Pox." [6]

The runaway garrison, strengthened to three thousand, returned and encamped three miles from Arcot to which they prepared to lay siege. Clive sallied out at midnight of September 24, took them by surprise, and chased them ramble-scramble. "We can no otherwise judge of ye Enemy's Loss [writes one of the participants] than by ye terrible Shrieks & Groans all over ye Camp. As our People were strictly order'd to keep their Ranks, less Plunder was got than perhaps might have been expected from such an Exploit." [7] A couple of nights afterwards, Clive again "caught 'em with their Pants down" and marched triumphantly back to town with the two 18-pounders the enemy had failed to cut off and capture en route from Madras.

Captain Clive's diversion at Arcot soon had the desired and anticipated effect. It alarmed and irritated the blockaders of Trichinopoly, to think their mighty capital of a hundred thousand souls had been seized by a handful of "dogs," and it balanced the scales of power. Neutrals such as the Maharajahs of Mysore and Madura now cast in their lots with the East India Company, offering aid at a price.

Chandá Sáhib, having lost face as well as Arcot, determined not to lose a moment in recovering his pride along with his capital. With prestige reclaimed and Arcot recaptured he would soon cool the ardor

[5] *Orme Papers.*
[6] *Rae Journal* (Sept. 19, 1751).
[7] *Siege & Defence of Arcott.*

of "those uncircumcised allies of the anus-beating English," the Rajah of Tanjore in particular.[8] So he sent his bastard son, Rizá Sáhib, with four thousand Hindustanis and 150 Frenchmen to reinforce the three thousand already massed around Arcot.

Clive was now in a tight spot. Half of his staff were sick, and his gallant eight hundred had been reduced by fighting and fever to 120 Europeans and two hundred sepoys. The walls manned by this handful were more than a mile in circumference, and in disrepair. The rampart was narrow, the parapet low, the ditch almost dry and choked with refuse. And the citadel gates, in two martello towers standing beyond the ditch and connected with the walls by a mere causeway, were "devillish aukward" to defend. All in all, "a damn'd delicate & precarious Position"![9]

But to "Daredevil Bob" *the greater the difficulty, the greater the glory.*

Settling down for a long siege, Clive supervised and helped repair the defenses and build new works. This was a dangerous undertaking; for "as the Enemy encreased in Numbers, they did in Audacity—now & then coming into the Town and cutting [forcibly circumcising and/or castrating] our People, who for that Reason were deny'd Port Liberty."[10]

Alarmed by reports of Captain Clive's reckless sorties, Mr. Saunders sent him this response: "Let me advize You not to grasp at too many things at once. . . . Would it not be better to keep your Force entire?" Clive's reaction was characteristic: "The best thing, Sir, is for You to do what *You* must do & for Me to do what *I* must do."[11]

On October 3, Rizá Sáhib and over seven thousand warriors occupied the villages within range of Arcot. Four mortars began to bombard the fort, and a heavy musket fire poured from hamlet roofs and upper windows. The siege was on!

Captain Clive and a welcoming committee of his three hundred braves sortied at two the following morning, scattering half of Rizá's surprised army in "bare-arsed" chaos, then blew up several lofty houses, nests of snipers.

[8] Hámid (in Persian: *án dústán-i-námakhtún-i-Inglísí-ustzení*).
[9] *Rae Journal.*
[10] *Siege & Defence of Arcott.*
[11] *Orme Papers.*

That was not the last time Clive dared to leave the citadel and take a swipe at Rizá Sáhib. Clive ever believed that attack is the best defense. Besides, he had to stampede his opponents long enough to level the sniper nests.

For the next several days, Clive's position worsened. Rizá's cannonade and musketry were so continuous that to show one's head was to have it blown off.

"So help us Hercules," Clive declared, "we'll stick it out till that bantling's sire quits Trichinopoly or till we've all of us sold our lives dearly to that end. I'd rather a bullet in the brain than lick a Frenchman's boots!" [12]

Rizá Sáhib broke through the weakened gates into the city on October 13. Clive watched thousands of white-robed warriors swarming through the streets, shooting their matchlocks into the air, looting and rioting and raping. But it did not trouble him. Let Rizá Sáhib roost in the palace of the Nevâb. He still held, and would hold, the fort!

An English sergeant later jotted in his journal:

> *The Enemy, now in possession of the Town, hinder'd All manner of Supplys of Provisions—cut off the Communication for the Waters coming into the Fort—and we had nothing before our Eyes but the dismall Prospect of either being starved out by Blockade or being oblidged to stand a Storm in case of their bringing Battering-cannon to make a Breach, which [i.e., standing a storm] the unshaken Fortitude of our Officers made us chearfully resolve upon rather than meanly to submitt to any Terms could be proposed us.*[13]

Sunrise, October 14. Captain Clive led a fifty-man "forlorn hope" out of the citadel. They charged the palace, in front of which stood a French battery of four fieldpieces. Facing not only the guns but sniper fire from dark windows, they charged the battery, killing all but three of the gunners who stumbled off into the palace. Ordering his men to fall back Clive made a singlehanded attempt to spike the guns, the objective of his sortie. He succeeded, driving four spikes into four touchholes before running for cover.

Only a dozen redcoats ducked into the fort alive. Close behind

[12] *Rae Journal.*
[13] *Siege & Defence of Arcott.*

them rushed the death-defying captain and their plucky platoon leader, Lieutenant Trenwith. As the two Englishmen were passing a *choultry* or resthouse that stood below the citadel walls, an enemy marksman drew a bead on Clive. Seeing this, Trenwith shoved his beloved chief into the wide entranceway. In that split second the sniper shifted his aim to the lieutenant and shot him dead.

Clive raced to safety with Trenwith's body over his shoulders. The young subaltern would get "a decent Christian Burial, not Moorish Mutilation & a Baptism of Gentoo Urine as Buzzard-bait." [14]

Clive experienced a succession of miraculous escapes. He led every sally in person. Indeed, the sepoys began to regard him with superstitious reverence as a darling of the gods, born under a lucky star, and not a few Europeans believed he had a charmed life. On several occasions, sergeants who accompanied him on his rampart rounds were shot down by his side; yet no ball touched him. "Pleased with ye Danger," he mocked sharpshooters and defied being picked off: confident that exposure was his shield, that destiny was his stronghold. "He that is born to be hanged shall never be drowned!" Clive answered those who feared for his life. "Twould seem that I cannot be killed, for Fate hath doubtless reserved me for something great." [15] But were he to die, the fearful knew, John Company would die as well.

On October 16, two thousand reinforcements, commanded by Murtezá 'Alí Khán, arrived to swell the already overwhelming enemy odds. Clive's decoy plan was working. Rizá Sáhib began to despair, and communicated this desperation to his father: "Clive is the devil incarnate! We cannot kill him. He is invincible!" [16]

Chandá Sáhib laughed in his beard, answering such damnable foolishness with more and more warriors from the siege of Trichinopoly. "Clive is a mere mortal," he wrote, "and I never knew a mere mortal that could not be killed in his time." [17]

Clive's defense of Arcot fort was a wonderwork. Its walls were crumbling, its towers in ruins, but Clive held every inch of it and beat back every assault. No wonder the French called him a *bête noire*, a

[14] *Rae Journal; Orme Papers.*
[15] Rae.
[16] Hámid.
[17] *Ibid.*

"black beast"; the Hindustanis *Shaytán-Bhái*, the "Satan's Brother"! [18]

For seven harrowing weeks, night and day, the fort was raked by musket, cannon, and mortar fire. Clive spent many a sleepless night keeping up the spirits of his men by repeated sorties. They worked around the clock, sleeping in shifts and snatches. There was no time to indulge that fatal luxury, *despair*. They fought for the lives of each other, and for the precious life of their captain. They threw up retrenchments behind the breaches, and they set up emplacements to bombard the palace. They dug riflepits, erected spiked fences, and laid mines, when cool darkness hid them from enemy sharpshooters. On October 24, the three hundred French troops welcomed two 18-pounders and seven smaller pieces of artillery from Pondicherry. Clive was as outgunned as he was outmanned! This new battery was so well ranged and so well trained that the first salvo knocked out both of his own 18-pounders. Clive remounted them elsewhere.

The siege of Arcot was as much a test of wills as a test of arms. And Rizá Sáhib, for all his advantages, was failing in both.

On November 1, Governor Saunders laid before the St. David Council a letter from Captain Clive

> *advizing that he is invested in the Fort of Arcot, where the Enemy are cannonading him; . . . that he has Three Months' Provisions, and thinks himself able to defend a Breach should the Enemy make one; (His only Apprehension, therefore, is his People's falling down through Fatigue); that he thinks no less Force than 1000 Blacks and 200 Europeans can attempt to relieve him, as the Enemy's Situation is strong and their Number increases daily.*[19]

"Our People sickly—not above 80 Military fit for Duty," scratched the unknown sergeant in his diary.[20] Despite what Clive reported to Saunders, rations were so low that the garrison took turns eating rice and drinking the water in which it was boiled. Though death stared them in the face, they dared not recognize it. Instead, their anxious eyes searched the horizon for sign of relief. Come it must.

Clive and his men were on half-rations, stoically anticipating starvation, when Rizá Sáhib again summoned them to surrender. In-

[18] *Ibid.*; Pillái.
[19] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*
[20] *Siege & Defence of Arcott.*

deed, the bastard prince's anxiety was so agonizing that he offered Clive fabulous bribes to wave the white flag. Clive retorted "I'm damned if I'll sell hope at the devil's price!" [21]

When bribery failed, threats followed. "'Od's cods, the bantling threatens while he quakes for fear! Let him take a dare. Cowards only threaten when they're safe." [22]

Rizá Sáhib threatened to hurl thousands against the fort, whatever the cost, and get satisfaction in a saturnalia of blood. Clive sent him a reply in Persian: "Your father is a usurper, you are an idiot, and your army is a rabble. You will do well if you think twice before sending such poltroons into a breach defended by English soldiers. Have a care, O miserable wretch!" [23]

But Clive's reasoning was as keen as his recklessness. While flouting Rizá, he was sending out runners in disguise to angle for aid from neutral native chieftains. Murárí Ráo, generalissimo of the Marathas, promised immediate help—for a price. Clive could not pay, but he could promise.

A relief force of two hundred redcoats and sepoys—all that Saunders and Morse could scrape together—left Fort St. George on November 2. They pushed to within twenty miles of Arcot, when Rizá Sáhib chased them away after a fierce encounter.

When the "bantling" learned that Mánakjí Sávant (Murárí Ráo's brother) was on the move with six thousand ferocious freebooters, he nearly jumped out of his skin. If Muslims feared anything in India, it was Marathas. The great guerrilla-prince Shivají, the notorious "Mountain Rat," had brought the horrendous Grand Mughal 'Aurangzeyb to his knees.

On November 9, Rizá Sáhib dispatched a delegation of peacemongers under a flag of truce to the headquarters of Captain Clive in the beleaguered citadel. "*S'lám 'alaykum!*" (Peace be upon you!) they saluted obsequiously, then made a peace offering: a pile of gold-pieces, plus safe conduct out of Arcot with arms and baggage, if Clive Sáhib would cease hostilities.

Clive responded in Hindustani: "Tell your master that we English will only negotiate with the sword."

[21] *Rae Journal.*
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] Hámid.

"Then you shall be put to the sword!" the envoys spat.

"*Inshálláh!*" Clive said wryly, with a shrug. "If God wills." [24]

On November 19, Maratha horsemen were spotted sizing up Rizá Sáhib's strength; and on the twentieth, a final effort was made to bribe Clive into submission. Meanwhile, another relief force of some three hundred Company troops and four fieldguns (commanded by Captain Kilpatrick) was on the march from Madras.

"I will not delay a moment to send a detachment of my troops (under my brother's command) to the assistance of such brave men as the defenders of Arcot, whose behavior has now convinced me that the English can fight." So Murárí Ráo communicated with Robert Clive by special messenger.[25] And Clive, emboldened to characteristic bravado, dispatched to Saunders and Morse: "The Enemy have made 2 large Breaches in the Walls, which I am fortifying in the best manner I can. I shall not be intimidated; and unless they should make a Breach of one-half the Fort, I am under no Apprehension whatever. I have received a Summons from Rezzah Saib, to whom I return'd an Answer that neither Threats nor Bribery shall hinder me from doing my Duty." [26]

To Rizá Clive wrote: "You tell your jackals, 'Bait the hook well; this fish will bite,' when they know better. It is high time you knew me as well. Do you still think, though you hold a dagger to my throat, that I will foul my hands with base bribes? This I say to you, 'Soak your head in forbidden wine.' *In vino veritas!* ["There's truth in wine," translated into Persian as *Haqq sherábtú hast*]." He added a postscript: "My peace offering is lead, not gold." [27]

True to his word, Clive sighted their mighty mascot (an ancient brass cannon dubbed *Málik-i-Maydán*, "King of the Battlefield") and lobbed a seventy-pound ball through the palace roof.

On November 19, a raiding party of Maratha horsemen swept like a whirlwind around the city and hijacked an enemy supply train en route to the palace. Rizá Sáhib now made up his mind to hazard an all-out assault on the citadel before Mánakjí Sávant and the approaching relief force compelled him to raise the siege.

[24] *Ibid.; Rae Journal.*
[25] Hámid.
[26] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*
[27] Hámid.

November 20 (A.H. 1165) was the sacred Muharrem, the Muslim New Year's, a festival commemorating the martyrdom of Prophet Muhammed's grandsons Hasen and Husayn. This saints' day was the psychological moment for a grand assault on the fort. The passions of True Believers were inflamed to a fever heat of fanaticism, and "Death to the Infidel!" was the rallying cry of all who sought salvation through fire and sword in the names of Allah and His Prophet.

Captain Clive's native spies brought him word of the impending attack. Three A.M. was zero hour, they said. Two columns, each of three thousand warriors, were to storm the breaches; another two divisions of equal number were to force the gates. Rafts had been built to cross the wide ditch, now flooded deep with river water—thanks to Clive's heroic sappers. Elephants, with huge iron plates on their foreheads, would charge the heavy wooden gates and break them down like battering-rams.

For a couple of hours, by lantern light, Clive looked over the defenses and briefed his troops. Then, worn out by nervous tension and seized with a slight attack of remittent fever, he dropped on his cot to snatch a wink of sleep.

Having done all they could to prepare for the worst, the anxious watch began for a haggard garrison. Eighty Europeans and 120 Indians settled down at their posts, awaiting the onslaught of twelve thousand fanatics.

All his little brown opium pills were gone, long since used to drive away the demons of pain. He had a bit of laudanum left, and some quinine (then called "Jesuit's bark" or "Peruvian powder") which he saved for his men. Malaria plagued him almost every day and night—burning, icy chills and harrowing ague—bringing with it a deadly depression which he fought as fiercely as his human foe. Throughout the long hot day he shivered in palsylike fever-fits, but the long hot night was worse—crowded with the figures of delirium. Rae reports,

> *C. will not allow me to touch him, nor can he be got to talk much; he is vile-temper'd & abstracted, and hath a Look of Death about him: as indeed ye lot of us do. None must go near him when he is hid away in his Quarters, else they would forfeit their Life, as he is dangerous violent in his Ill-humours & Sufferings. Extream*

Debillity, ye consequence of excessive Strain & Debauchery, hath ravaged his Body & Spirit. His Black Wench reports him Impotent for Coitus per Vaginam, *yet hath seen him mastuprate on occasion; to be sure, he will unconscionably handle his Parts, as if in Fear of losing them, and his State of Irritation is like to that of a Child. When it was become necessary to abandon ye 200 Punks* [prostitutes] *to ye Enemy on ye Score of Bare Subsistence, he seem'd much distress'd (as tho' ye Troops must needs mutiny for Want of Venery) despite he kept a Wench for his own Diversion, also a Pathick* [catamite] *for his Body-servant, which ye Wench reports will flout her & sollicit his Master's Attention with ye shameless Exposure & Handling of his* Membrum erectum*—to no avail. That he* [Clive] *tollerates such a mean filthy Waif is Proof-positive he hath lost his Wits.*

Clive was awake, wild-eyed in a cold sweat, at three A.M.—holding his breath, straining his ears. *Nothing.*

He had just dozed off again, when the gray stillness of dawn was shattered by three successive blasts signalling the assault. Clive sprang from his cot and lunged out of the bunker, clear-witted and self-possessed with that unfailing nervous energy which made him seem almost superhuman.

Bugles blared, drums clattered, and the two hundred defenders jumped to their posts. They bore the look of corpses, and their uniforms were filthy rags, but they could still fight for their lives. Clive called to them from the highest battlement: "Hold fire till they reach the ditch, then blow 'em to hell!" [28]

Twelve thousand Muslims, fired to religious frenzy heightened by hashish, rushed upon the fort, roaring their ancient battle cries: "*Alalalalalalalalláhuakber!*" (Allah is Almighty!) "*Láiláhillalláh Muhammedurasúlulláh!*" (There's no god but Allah; Muhammed is the Apostle of Allah!) and, "*Máro! máro!*" (Kill! kill!) War elephants trumpeted, drums thundered, cymbals clashed, and bugles shrilled.

As the deafening horde spilled into the outworks, there was an earth-shaking thunderburst as a stream of fire and billows of smoke gushed from the ramparts. The elephants, terrified by exploding mines, turned and trampled hundreds of assailants in their frenzied flight. Thrown into chaos by this avalanche of mammoths, six thousand Hindustanis fell back from the two gates in a riotous tumble.

[28] *Rae Journal.*

But six thousand more stormers hurled themselves against the two breaches, yowling: "*Alláhuakber! Láiláhillalláh!*"

Captain Clive darted feverishly from one emplacement to another, checking range, giving orders, inspiring courage.

Seventy drug-crazed *gházíyeh* or berserkers, Champions of the Faith, led the storming parties across the moat. With them was Murtezá 'Alí, Rizá Sáhib's commander-in-chief and himself a *gházi*, waving his scimitar and frothing at the mouth. These white-gowned demoniacs were on a suicide mission to win the joys of Paradise—big-breasted houris, beardless boys or *ghilmán*, a full cup and food aplenty—with the severed heads and foreskins of Unbelievers as entrance fee. "*Dín! Dín!*" (The Faith! the Faith!) they shrieked. "*Yá Hasen! yá Husayn!*" (O Hasen! O Husayn!) "*Mawt lil-maghlúf!*" (Death to the Uncircumcised!) "*Máro! máro!*" (Kill! kill!) [29]

Clive watched them launch forth on a huge raft, then dashed up to the bunker roof. A gunner had double-shotted the 70-pounder, as ordered. Clive put portfire to touchhole. Two seventy-pound balls and a blast of langrage struck the raft midstream, blowing up a gust of water and bamboo splinters and bloody pulp. The float was smashed in half and its seventy passengers dismembered or drowned. Murtezá 'Alí was among the drowned.

The three thousand native warriors, left without a leader, wavered, then took to their heels. Only three thousand remained to storm the fort, and these were driven on by French officers and more narcotics. They rafted over the moat, poured in and out of the dry ditches, scrambled up the breaches, were mowed down in heaps by musketry and cannonade, blasted to shreds by mines and hand grenades, but on they surged, running amuck, wild-eyed and raving. On to the retrenchments bristling with spikes, jagged with stakes. They faltered at the foot of the last earthwork as bombs exploded in their midst, as grapeshot raked and shrapnel ripped. Then they surged back like ebbing breakers.

After that hour of butchery the siege of Arcot was at an end. Rizá Sáhib, wanting no more dealings with the Devil's Brother, cleared out of the city. Leaving defenses littered and piled with hundreds upon hundreds of dead and dying, abandoning guns and munitions

[29] *Ibid.*; Hámid; *Mu'ásir-i-'Umr.*

and treasure chests, he beat a shameful retreat fifteen miles westward to Vellore with the remnants of his once-formidable army.

Captain Clive and his garrison (only four killed, two wounded) were as astounded as they were in raptures of relief. They had taken Arcot by fluke; and they had held it against impossible odds. The unknown sergeant writes,

> *There were 12,000 Cartridges expended during the Action, so it will be readily allow'd we were not idle! . . . Thus did Providence disappoint our Fears, and relieve us from the dread Necessity of starving or submitting to the Terms of mercyless Barbarians. We fully & unmolested enjoy'd the Fruits of the Earth so long deny'd us, tho' every Day in our Sight, and solaced ourselves with the pleasing Reflexion of having maintain'd the Character of Britons in a Clime so remote from our own.*[30]

In historic records, it wasn't a long siege: only two months. Nor is it memorable as one of the great or decisive sieges of the world. Yet it remains one of the most remarkable war feats ever performed. With dilapidated defenses and minimal firepower, two hundred held off an estimated twelve thousand better situated and better provisioned. That they did so may be attributed to the example of their undaunted and indefatigable leader.

Colonel Mark Wilks, a contemporary, wrote: "Captain Clive, infusing his own Spirit into the Remnant of his little Party, display'd in the Defence of this Place that ready Perception of the best possible Resources, under every varied Emergency, which Men of ordinary Talents are contented to acquire as the Result of Study, long Experience, and attentive Observation." But Clive, always the gambler, knew his enemy well: knew the winning devices of brag and bluff. It was his understanding that the Oriental resembles a dog which attacks a man for his fear. Had he shown himself fearful, he would have aroused enough hatred in his enemies to justify their fighting a war to the death. By treating them with contempt, he robbed them of their cold-blooded resolution. Those *racaille, vile canaille* (riffraff, miserable scum)—those "packs of dogs," as Dupleix was pleased to

[30] *Siege & Defence of Arcott.*

term the English troops—had again proved they could fight. The siege of Arcot re-established British prestige in India.[31]

"I am well-assured that Fortune is bent in your favor," Muhammed 'Alí congratulated Clive. "You are the Daring in War (*Sábit Jang Behádur*)." [32] And Saunders wrote: "I am pleased to inform You that the Moollahs [Muslim scholars] are writing a History of the Wars of Arcot, wherein You will be deliver'd down to the future Ages." [33]

Not a moment was lost in following up a masterstroke that resounded throughout India. Rizá Sáhib's decimated and demoralized army was broken up in disgrace. Captain Clive would prove to the native princes of Southern India, who were anxiously watching the struggle, that the Englishmen could play a better tug-of-war than the French. Neutral (and not so neutral) potentates, certain that the gods are on the side of the stronger, threw in with Company Behádur. Many of Rizá Sáhib's soldiers, with the same thought hastened to enlist in the *Kampení* service; and the Emirs of Arcot swearing by Allah to hold the town for Muhammed 'Alí, presented Clive Sáhib with a richly caparisoned elephant (symbol of power and prestige) "as a compliment of submission." [34]

George Pigot now penned to Clive: "I very heartily congratulate You on your Nabobship [a facetious allusion to his rich renown]. . . . Tho' I don't mind Money myself, your Expedition will make You a much better Figure in History if it pays itself than otherwize. Take care of that." [35] Clive did so, exacting two thousand rupees from the Emirs of Arcot, allegedly to defray campaign expenses.

Having split Chandá Sáhib's horde in half by his diversion at Arcot, Clive's next objective was the relief of Trichinopoly, which now seemed practicable. By leaving Captain James Kilpatrick and seven hundred troops at Arcot, he could divert Rizá Sáhib from rejoining his father and thereby making a decisive move on the Gibraltar of India again unfeasible without great loss of life.

Clive marched back to Madras, where he received a conquering hero's welcome, then sailed down to Fort St. David. There he laid

[31] Pillái; Hámid; 'Alí Khán; *Mu'ásir-i-'Umr;* Ibn Hasen, Burhán: *Tuzúk-i-Válájáhí.*

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] *Orme Papers.*

[34] Orme, Robert: *Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan.*

[35] *Orme Papers; Pigot Letters.*

plans with Governor Saunders for the relief of Trichinopoly, which still held out, thanks to the scare Clive had thrown into Chandá Sáhib through son Rizá.

"What must Fortune have in store for me?" he addressed Dr. Rae, for the first time in many a day. "I can't for the life of me be killed!" Rae comments:

> *Ye Man is growing madder every Day. Power is gone to his Pate, and a Thirst for Riches & Vain-glory; and he is become so Moorish in his Tastes, that he hath taken to ye Practice of Voluptuaries: viz., clipping his Genital Hair to ye Skin, a Practice salutary were it not ye Habit of Whores & Pathicks:*
>
> *"Inguina quod calido levas tibi Dropace, causa est:*
> *Irritant volsas levia Membra Lupas . . ."*
> [The reason why you strip your groin of hair
> Is that smooth members impassion hairless sluts.
> *Ausonius*]
>
> *"Cum depilatos, Chreste, Coleos Portes*
> *Et Vulturino Mentulam parem collo . . ."*
> [Your balls, Chrestus, are stripped of hair
> And your prick like a vulture's neck.
> *Martial*]

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* *17* *

THE DEVIL'S BROTHER

January, 1752. Unable to inspirit Chandá Sáhib to storm Trichinopoly, which the Indian was content to starve into surrender even if it took ten years, Joseph-François Dupleix determined to play a desperate game with his great rival, Robert Clive; for Jeanne assured him that he still held a winning hand.

As soon as Clive reached Fort St. David, Dupleix tried a war feint to divert his attention from Trichinopoly long enough for that place

to fall. Thus, Messire Duplicity aimed to turn Clive's own trick against him.

Money, munitions, and four hundred French soldiers were sent to Rizá Sáhib, who rounded up at least half of his scattered forces, and threatened Madras as well as Arcot with besiegement. Company warehouses outside the walls of Fort St. George were looted and burned, the native town was seized, and Governor Morse was intimidated into paying extortion tribute to Marquis Dupleix.

The ruse worked. With the 700-man garrison at Arcot in peril, with the supply route to Madras cut off by French occupation of Conjeeveram, with Fort St. George under attack, and with the whole upper province in flames of rebellion, Captain Clive had to forget Trichinopoly for the time being and again turn his enterprising attention northward.

"What matters it whether Ráma rules or Rávana rules?" This was the saying of a fickle and fatalistic folk, whose loyalties were as fitful as lightning flashes. All that Clive had done was undone at a blow, and once more he took on the Herculean task of re-establishing John Company's power and prestige among the fickle Hindustanis.

It was mid-February when Captain Clive started northward by forced marches with 380 Europeans, thirteen hundred Indians, and six field guns against an enemy that numbered four hundred Europeans, forty-five hundred Indians, and twelve pieces of artillery. After leading Clive a merry chase in their play for time, Rizá Sáhib and Colonel Combault d'Auteuil (Dupleix' gouty brother-in-law) set a trap for Clive at Kaveripak, a town on the north bank of Palar River, diagonally across from Arcot.

Reckoning the foe was already besieging Arcot, Clive and his troops were slogging along the dusty road to Kaveripak in loose order when, just as the sun was setting, a masked battery opened up on them from a grove some distance to the right. "Steady, gents, steady!" Clive rallied. "Form up quick, and stand fire! We've thrashed the curs before, and by God we'll thrash 'em again!" [1]

Clive held off d'Auteuil's massive assault until darkness and in the lull improvised a plan for a counteroffensive which he considered necessary to sustain the morale of his men. Leading two hundred of his English infantry (among them the braves who had defended

[1] *Rae Journal.*

Arcot) in the darkness he made a flanking attack on the rear of d'Auteuil's position. He struck the grove where the French artillery was emplaced, cutting down gunners and sepoys like so much straw. The routed enemy lost all their cannonry and baggage and over four hundred troops. "Had it not been late in the Evening," Clive reported to Saunders on February 29, "not a single Man would have escaped." [2]

The psychological impact of this British victory on the Indian people was dynamic. Marquis Dupleix, despite Madame's ingenious efforts, was no longer in good odor with native rulers who measured men by their military success. The E.I.C. was indeed *Kampení Jehán Behádur*, "the bravest Company in the world." And Robert Clive, its champion, was thereafter known throughout India as *Sábit Jang Behádur*—"The Greatly Daring in War"—an honor bestowed upon him by Muhammed 'Alí Khán.[3]

No sooner had Clive, as "Sábit Jang Behádur," paraded in triumph to Arcot than he was handed an urgent message from Mr. Saunders at Fort St. David, ordering him to return directly with all his troops and march to the relief of Trichinopoly, where the garrison was reported to be on its last legs for want of provisions. Gingens had succumbed to fever, and Cope (Saunders said) had gone out of his wits. "In the name of Allah, come quickly!" was Muhammed 'Alí's plea.[4]

Clive reached headquarters on March 11, stopping along the way to destroy "that Monument of Villainy," the shrinelike village of *Dúpléks-Fatehábád*, now the dead symbol of French supremacy.

[2] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*
[3] Hámid; Pillái; 'Alí Khán; Ibn Hasen; *Mu'ásir-i-'Umr.*
[4] *Dalton Journal; Fort St. David MS. Records;* Hámid.

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THE DARING IN WAR

Clive was ready to move in three days, but his plans were somewhat upset by the unexpected arrival from England of Major Stringer Lawrence. With the "Old Cock" were much-needed reinforcements

and several not-so-welcome newcomers: captains senior to, and envious of, Clive. The following letter, drafted by three anonymous Regular officers, was sent "To the Hon'ble Stringer Lawrence, Esq., Commander-in-Chief of the Hon'ble Company's Forces in India":

> *Tho' We claim no other Merit as Officers than to have done our Duty in All the various Depts. of the Military Service, and are sensible how Subordination is necessary for carrying on Operations with Success & Unanimity, yet We can not dissemble Our Surprize & Discontent to see a Man, who till lately has emerged from the Obscurity of a Counting-house into the Field of Honour, prefer'd by Favour to an Hon'ble Command to which several of Us had a prior Right by Seniority and, We may truely say, a Knowledge & Experience acquired in divers Campaigns before his Name was even mention'd as an Officer. His unbecoming Haughtiness, and Want of Regard for our Opinion in Measures carried on without even intimating his Designs but to his Friends & Confidants, is a Contempt We will not submit to. We hope You will make him sensible of his illiberal Deportment, and that whatever Idea the Hon'ble Company might have of his great Exploits, there is none of Us but were capable to conquer a Province* [Arcot] *which the Enemy abandon'd with Disgrace & Pusillanimity. Lest the Service should suffer by our Divisions & Animosities, We think it consistent with Prudence not to sign our Names. We hope this Gentleman's Preferment will not serve as a Precedent, and earnestly trust that our Dissatisfaction merits Your generous Consideration.*[1]

But the Old Cock did not suffer from "the green sickness," and confounded the jealous officers by appointing Clive his brigade major (second-in-command). He gave the "pipe-down order" as follows: "Clive is a military genius, and God blind the jaundiced eye that sees ill in it!" [2] He later wrote:

> *Owing to his uncommon Success, some People are pleased to term Capt. Clive fortunate & Lucky; but in my Opinion, from ye Knowledge I have of ye Gentleman, he deserved & might expect from his Conduct every thing as it fell out—a Man of undaunted Resolution, of a cool Temper, and of a Presence of Mind which never left him*

[1] Caraccioli.
[2] *Rae Journal.*

in ye greatest Danger—born a Soldier; for withoute a Millitary Education of any sort, or much Conversing with any of ye Profession, from his Judgement & Good Sense he led an Army like an experienced Officer & a brave Soldier, with a Prudence that certainly warranted Success.[3]

Indeed, after Arcot, Indian (and many European) troops refused to serve under any captain but Clive, "the Daring in War"!

On March 17, Lawrence and Clive sallied forth to relieve Trichinopoly with four hundred Europeans, eleven hundred sepoys, and eight guns, and a large caravan of provisions and supplies. Chandá Sáhib and Jacques Law awaited them with nine hundred Frenchmen, two thousand sepoys, twenty thousand Hindustani irregulars, and fifty guns. Their official orders were not to wait but: "*Donnez-vous l'assaut à Tritchenopoly, coûte que coûte!*" (Storm Trichinopoly, whatever the cost!) [4]

Colonel-Chevalier Law was a nephew of the Scottish financier-adventurer John Law of Lauriston, perpetrator of the notorious "Mississippi Scheme" or "Law's Bubble." Unlike his ill-starred uncle, who served as a cautionary example, Jacques held to the virtue of prudence. Nor was his fatalistic confederate, Chandá Sáhib, one to take risks. They were content to watch and wait.

Dupleix, fed up with Law's lack of spirit, ordered him to strike out against Lawrence and Clive before they crossed the Cauvery River. *M. le Gouverneur* wrote: "*Il sera difficile de persuader en France que trente mille hommes en ayent layssé passer deux mille. . . . Il est de votre honneur de détruire le secours. Tout dépend de ce coup.*" (It will be hard persuading those in France that thirty thousand of our men would have let two thousand past. . . . It is to your honor to destroy the relief force. Everything depends upon this blow.) [5] Law ignored this order on Chandá's advice, their intention being to draw the English into a trap rather than to be lured away themselves. Besides, war had not yet been officially declared; so the prudent Frenchman could charge the English with "aggression." The siege of Trichi-

[3] Lawrence, Stringer: *Journal* (quoted in Cambridge's *Account of the War in India*).

[4] Law, Jacques-François: *Journal*.

[5] Martineau.

nopoly was merely an "internal (or domestic) affair," of which the French were "active observers"!

"Care will kill a cat," Clive suggested to his patron. "Let us turn Law's timidity to our advantage." [6]

Lawrence winked and grinned, for it was Law who had laid him by the heels at the siege of Pondicherry.

Clive's plan was tactically simple: Divide the column and attack Law on both flanks, thus forcing him into the open, circumventing his snare, and enabling the garrison at Trichinopoly to take him in the rear. Lawrence agreed to it at once. As the Old Cock scrawled in his journal: "Promising myself great Success from ye Activity & Vigillance of Capt. Clive, I detacht him with 400 of my best Europeans, 1200 Seapoys & 4000 Horse to take Post on ye other Side of ye Cauvery River." But, *The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men . . .*

When infuriated Dupleix sent d'Auteuil to replace Law, the young procrastinator suddenly stirred from his safe spot and launched out against the advancing adversary. In so doing, he raised the siege of Trichinopoly; for Chandá Sáhib and his horde tailed reluctantly after him. He would damned soon show that vengeful tyrant and his gouty old flunky that a Law could fight to save his Caledonian honor. With contempt that was typical of Dupleix he had written Law: "*Je suis persuadé que cet arrangement va fayre playsir à madame votre femme, quy ne désire que le moment de vous tenir dans ses bras.*" (I am convinced that this arrangement [d'Auteuil's supersession of Law] will give pleasure to your wife, who longs for the moment when she can hold you in her arms.) [7]

While Major Lawrence flank-marched to the left, Captain Clive crossed his division onto a long narrow tongue of land between the Coleroon and Cauvery in order to push from the right. Joined by four thousand Maratha horsemen and a strong detachment from the freed garrison of Trichinopoly, Clive learned that Law was on the move up the island to meet him. These were Lawrence's orders: "Hold ye Enemy downe long enough for me to execute a Flank Attack, and nothing is lost from our original Plan." [8] Clive was of like mind. Throwing up a string of earthworks, he stationed his troops in two

[6] *Rae Journal.*
[7] Guerrin, Eugène: *Dupleix d'après des documents inédits.*
[8] *Clive Fieldbook.*

Hindu temples and awaited the approach of a multitudinous foe.

On April 15, Captain Clive learned that Colonel d'Auteuil was on the march with eleven hundred troops to take him in flank and rear. Ever acting upon the dictum that "Attack is the best defense," and without informing his superior of this glory-hunt, he left a small detachment to guard the camp and (after dark) forced-marched northeastward across the Coleroon to intercept Law's rival. But Clive slogged fifteen miles only to find that d'Auteuil, apprised of his approach, had fallen back. So Clive returned to camp, his planned surprise counterattack frustrated.

Colonel Law and Chandá Sáhib entrenched their army at the huge pagoda of Seringam, four miles from Clive, then thrust forward a task force of eighty Europeans (half of whom were Company turncoats) and five hundred sepoys to seize Clive's encampment. By so doing, they hoped to cut him off from Lawrence and trap him for the kill. However, by a quirk of fate, "The Enemy (in the Evening of the same Day) received Advice of my March, but none of my Return; in consequence of which, a Party advanced to take possession of this strong Post on a Supposition that I was absent & had not left Force sufficient to make any Resistance."[9] As fortune willed it, Captain Clive and his division returned (dead-beat from their futile thirty-mile march) less than an hour before the unexpected arrival of Law's raiders.

In the dead of night, April 16, English sentries challenged and were answered: "'Tis volunteer reinforcements from Major Lawrence!" Eighty armed Europeans in civilian togs and five hundred armed Indians in turbans and loincloths passed through the unsuspecting outlying and inlying pickets. Seconds later, 580 muskets were leveled at the twin temples, and a rolling blast shattered the stillness.

Clive sprang from his cot in a roadhouse that stood between the pagodas. Bullets riddled his bed and smashed a bandbox at his feet. His native valet (Mohandás Kalinga), sleeping on the floor beside the cot, was killed instantly: "a terrible Loss to C.," Rae remarks sardonically, "as Cullingah was reported an accomplish'd Omm-chooseah [*ámchúsiyá*, mango-sucker or fellator, so called because the ripe mango fruit resembles the glans penis in shape and color]."

[9] *Ibid.; Orme Papers.*

Clive grabbed his sword and lunged to the door in his nightshirt. Cutting his way out of the *choultry* in company with other officers, he was but vaguely aware of the hundreds of enemy sepoys who were firing into the temples and bivouacs, bayoneting half-naked soldiers as they dashed for safety. The whole encampment was in a panic: Marathas leaping on their horses and bolting over the plain, redcoats and ragheads scrambling for their flintlocks through a storm of lead.

Clive accosted the men in their own tongue: "*Áré! Tum kawn ho? Hayn-hayn?*" (Hey! Who are you? What are you up to?) His only answers were obscenities: "*Frangí ba'inchút! Gaddámí bétichút! Káfir máchút!*" (European sistercunt! Daughtercunt Goddam! Infidel mothercunt!) [10]

Suddenly a native officer darted forward to cut him down. Clive blocked the chopping blow, then plunged his own blade into the assailant's belly. As Clive lurched back, the gasping Indian nicked his forehead and cheek and sliced his right thigh with a feeble stroke, then staggered and sprawled. The other sepoys ran for their lives.

His nightshirt shredded and bloody, his wounded face and thigh smarting, Clive rallied two hundred redcoats and hemmed in the eighty hostile Europeans in one of the temples. By now, all the invading Hindustanis were on the run—with Clive's cavalry after them, maneuvering like a wide-sweeping scythe.

"By God, what admirable audacity!" he later blurted to Dr. Rae, while his wounds were being dressed. "The worst of it is, I came damnable nigh to having my precious tool lopped off!" ("A Pity for him it was not!" Rae comments, "for that Instrument of Abuse hath caused him more Trouble than it is worth.")

In the white still dawn, Captain Clive called out to the eighty attackers who had barricaded themselves in a temple: "*Holà! Ecoute, canaille! Je vous fais l'offre des conditions!*" (Hey! Hark ye, rabble! I offer you terms!)

"To hell with your terms, patchcock!" the Irish commander replied, firing a shot that just missed its mark.

"You damned fools! Unless you surrender at once, I shall order my troops to storm the place; and by God, sirrah, they'll give no quarter!"

"Arrah, ye whoreson lobsters!" Waving his sword, the bellowing

[10] Rae's orthography: *Arry! toom cawn ho? Hein! hein!; Fringuie Baen-choot! Goddammy Baety-choot! Coffer Mah-choot!*

Irishman broke out of the temple. He and a dozen of his men were dropped dead in their tracks by a single volley, and the rest thought best to emerge with their hands up.[11]

Clive, leaning on the shoulders of two English sergeants, limped up to the corpse-cluttered portico to receive the surrender of sixty-seven desperadoes. He was faint from loss of blood, and his flesh wounds were piercingly painful. Just as he braced his back against a pillar, one of the turncoats snatched up a musket.

Bang! The ball missed Clive by inches but blew out the brains of both sergeants. Splattered with gore, Clive stumbled off the portico. In a flash, all but thirty Frenchmen were shot down by a volley. Thus were "scurvy deserters" dealt with!

Clive lost nearly a hundred men in this surprise attack, but the enemy lost 580. Maratha horsemen slaughtered every last one of the runaway sepoys, and the thirty French prisoners were hustled off to jail at Fort St. David. The commander-in-chief penned to his "pet":

Trich'y
Apr. 16/52

Sir,

I rejoyce at your Success, as your Wounds are not dangerous; and if they spoil ye Beauty of your Face, they raise your Fame in having served your Country when you got 'em.

I remaine, Dear Clive,

Your very sincere Friend,
Stringer Lawrence

P.S.—You did Well in shooting those Deserters. Had you not done so, I should have order'd You to hang 'em Oute of Hand—for an Example. Spys & Turn-coates I have no Compassion for.—S.L.[12]

The Old Cock later wrote:

It is ye Pride of many to say, "I have fought under Clive." To be sure, you can recognize on ye spot Soldiers who have fought under Clive; for Men who have any thing to do with him acquire a new Character. This Young Man's early Genius first surprized & engaged

[11] Rae; Orme.
[12] *Maskelyne/Orme Papers.*

my Attention at ye Siege of Davycotah, where he behaved in Courage & Judgement much beyond what could be expected from his Years; and his great Success afterwards confirm'd what I had said to many People concerning him. Time & again his Soldierly Sangfroyd & Presence of Mind turn'd an imminent Rout into an immediate Victory.[13]

On June 8, Colonel Combault d'Auteuil and his field force approached the gates of Valconda to procure fresh supplies. The *qil'adár* or commandant of the fort, who had accepted a bribe, delayed the French with debauchery outside the gates until Clive arrived with his division. The trap was then sprung. Encamped with an abundance of wine and women, the "Frogs" were in no condition to fight. Caught in a crossfire, with his *culotte* down, the gimpy Frenchman surrendered with his whole drunken force to *le goddam retaillé:* "the clipped Goddam." (The French were wont to scorn Clive as *Le Retaillat:* "The Clipcock.") [14]

Lawrence scrawled to Clive: "I heartily congratulate You on this glorious Success, as it has open'd ye Way for us to join & put an End to ye War, and you'll hear a Salute from Ye Rock [Trichinopoly] before this reaches you." [15] Captain Dalton, Gingens' successor, also wrote: "I give you Joy, my dear Friend, on the Success of your Scheme, which I think must be utter Ruin to the Enemy's Army. As almost every body disapproved of it, You have All the Honour." [16]

Colonel Law was now completely cut off from Pondicherry. He had tested Clive's strength, and found it *sans pareil.* Dozens of his regulars and sepoys were deserting every day, and well over half of Chandá Sáhib's horde had called it quits. When the revolutioner himself fled Seringam with a few loyal cutthroats, Law swallowed his Scottish pride and handed over his sword to Major Lawrence and Captain Clive on June 14. In so doing, he would suffer his foes to deal the *coup de grâce*—the merciful deathblow—to Marquis Dupleix.

When Dupleix learned of this ignominious defeat, he could neither eat nor sleep nor go to Mass; and not even Jeanne could comfort him. "*Imbéciles! imbéciles!*" he raved. "They deserve hanging! I'll hang

[13] *Lawrence Journal* (quoted in Cambridge's *Account of the War in India*).
[14] *Law Journal; Lettres édifiantes et curieuses;* Hámid; Pillái.
[15] *Orme Papers.*
[16] *Clive Papers.*

them all, if the English don't!" [17] What *avortons, décrotteurs, bandits:* abortions, bootlicks, blackguards! *Nom de Dieu!*

O mighty Caesar! dost thou lie so low?
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure?

Dupleix had dismissed Clive as an "arrogant upstart," a "blustering clown." "If I could only capture that lunatic," he now said to Ánandaranga Pilláí, "half of my worries would be over."

"What would you do with him, O Excellency?"

"Hang him!"

Jacques Law capitulated on one condition: that the life of Chandá Sáhib, worthless though it now was, should be spared. Clive and the Old Cock agreed to this stipulation without argument. But Muhammed 'Alí Khán, newly proclaimed Neváb of the Carnatic, had other ideas. He wasn't running any more risks. When Chandá petitioned the Rajah of Tanjore for political asylum, Muhammed 'Alí hired Pratáp Singh to dispose of what he deemed a dangerous rival-nuisance. On the same day that Lawrence and Clive consented to pardon Chandá Sáhib, a Maratha assassin gouged him between the legs with a steel-clawed knuckleduster, stabbed him in the heart with a twelve-inch pigsticker, then chopped off his head with a battle-axe. Wrapping the trophy in silk, Pratáp Singh sent it to Muhammed 'Alí with his noble compliments; and the Neváb, perching Chandá Sáhib's head on the point of a lance, paraded his *memento mori* in triumph through the streets of Arcot: "attended [says Orme] by a hundred thousand Spectators, insulting it with all the obscene and indecent Invectives peculiar to the Manners of Indostan. It was afterwards carefully pack'd up in a Box and deliver'd to . . . the Great Mogull at Delly [Delhi]: a Practice generally observed to heighten the Reputation of a successfull Cause." [18]

Clive shrugged. "Had he placed himself in our hands, his life would have been safe. However, we each of us must suffer our own destinies; and 'tis vain to quarrel with 'em." [19] As the Faithful say, *Máshálláh:* 'Tis the will of Allah! And John Dalton wrote:

[17] Pilláí.
[18] *Military Transactions;* Hámid; 'Alí Khán; *Mu'ásir-i-'Umr.*
[19] *Rae Journal.*

However repulsive this Conduct may seem to European Sensibilities, yet it must be remember'd that the Actors in it were ignorant Heathens & the Conduct of Mahomed Aly was much more excusable than that of His Most Christian Majesty Charles the Second, who order'd the Body of his Enemy Cromwell to be disinterr'd & hung in Chains, besides heaping every possible Indignity on the Corpses of others of his Enemies.[20]

[20] *Wilks MSS.*

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THE DREAM

The tug-of-war for the Carnatic, carried on in the name of their respective puppets, was all but over between the English and French. Backed by British bayonets, the sensuously fair, fat, sleek-mustachioed bastard of Anveruddín Khán ruled the Arcot roost. But Selábat Jang, Dupleix's pawn, was still Nizám of the Deccan; and the dead Chandá's son, Rizá Sáhib, was now recognized and ordained as Carnatic Neváb by the French "Viceroy of the Grand Mughal," Messire Duplicity.

Clive, weakened by fever and fatigue and the effects of his wounds, betook himself to Fort St. George in the care of Lieutenant Maskelyne. He looked forward to convalescence in Calcutta, to the invigorating atmosphere of Bengal, but his hopes were dashed. Madras was again in peril. Two French strongholds (Covelong and Chingleput) stood dangerously near, threatening to smash up the seat of E.I.C. authority in retaliation for the ignominious defeats of Law and d'Auteuil and the inglorious death of Chandá Sáhib.

On August 31, 1752, Governor Saunders and Council agreed that the reduction of Covelong and Chingleput would "greatly contribute to the Tranquillity of the Country about us"; that the French held them "only by Right of Conquest (without any Cession, Legal Grant or Firmaun)"; that Muhammed 'Alí's "natural Claim to them as

Governour of the Carnatick Country remains unimpeach'd"; and that

> *We may, agreeable to the Law of Nations or rather the Custom of Europe (not to mention the Example shew'd us by the French in attacking Arcot and Trichinopoly, where our Colours were flying), without infringing the late Treaty of Peace between our Sovereign and the French King, assist the Nabob . . . in recovering these Places. It is therefore agreed that Captain Clive, with what Force can be spared, . . . undertake the Siege of Covelong & Chingleputt.*[1]

Two hundred recruits had just arrived from England, and five hundred natives had been enlisted as sepoys, so Governors Morse and Saunders besought Clive (worn out as he was) to lick these "Johnny Raws" into shape and lead them to the reduction of the two fortresses. Maskelyne (on Rae's advice) was against it, fearing his friend would suffer a nervous breakdown; but when Clive reminded him that they had a score to settle with the *chawkídár* (gatekeeper) of Chingleput, for the forcible circumcision and sexual assault he had suffered there, he gave up his objections. " 'Revenge is sweet, I'll allow,' M. said, doubtless thinking of his tortured Tool & aggrieved Postern." [2]

Robert Orme, Clive's former trade partner, noted in his journal: "It can hardly be expected that any Officer, who has acquired Reputation, would risque it by taking the Command of raw Recruits; but Capt. Clive, whose Military Life has been a continued Option of Difficulties, voluntarily offer'd his Service: notwithstanding that his Health is much impair'd by the Excess of his Fatigues."

The two hundred European rookies were good-for-noughts and scapegraces rounded up from flashhouses and pubs, but Clive made respectable soldiers of them. He shocked them into discipline ("exposed himself continually to the hottest of the Enemy's Fire"), shamed them into courage ("judging that Shame would avail more than Severity to reclaim them from their Cowardice"), then assaulted Covelong with two 24-pounders and seven hundred men-at-arms.[3]

[1] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*
[2] *Rae Journal.*
[3] Orme.

On September 18, Clive writes in his fieldbook, "I summon'd the Fort to surrender; in Answer to which the Governour commanded me to retire from a Fort belonging to the King of France, and where the French Colours were flying, and assuring me at the same time he would defend the place to the last Extremity." The fort mounted thirty guns, and was garrisoned by fifty Frenchmen and three hundred sepoys, but it was no match for the challenger. After three days of siege, Covelong fell.

Chingleput fell on September 30, also after three days of siege. Its gatekeeper, taken alive, was called to account for having set the "tiger-women" upon Maskelyne and his companions. According to native reports, Clive and Maskelyne settled the score by having him shorn of penis as well as testicles and sent with their compliments to Rizá Sáhib as a *sandelí*, a "clean-cut" gelding or "*eunuque aqueduc*," head of the harem. Rizá allegedly expressed his appreciation by decapitating the poor devil.[4] However, according to Orme, "The Chowkydar of the Fort was made to pay for a former Treachery, and was hang'd by Order of the Nabob [Muhammed 'Alí]."[5] Whichever story (if either!) is true, the fact remains that "Revenge is sweet."

Rae, who accompanied the expedition in his regular capacity and who seems a trustworthy source, states that

> *Messrs. C. & M. lay'd ye Chawkydar by ye Heels & removed him to a Dungeon of ye Fort, where he was castrated by ye Nabob's Men for having inflicted a like Outrage upon a Cossid* [envoy] *of Mahomet Ally, then hang'd as an Example in full View of ye People. Fiat Justitia, ruat Caelum!* [*Let justice be done, though the heavens fall!*] *Ye Killadar* [*fort commandant*] *was also gelded, in Terrorem, and despatch'd to Rizzah Saib for his Zenonnah* [zenáneh, *harem*]. *Some of ye Tyger-wenches being taken, such as were in ye Fort at ye Time of its Capture, they were put to Death by Stoning: ye Orthodox Punishment for gross Feminine Immorality, ye more heartily executed because ye Victims were Gentoos. Mr. C. was in no wise moved to Pity or Scorn by such a Spectacle of Barbarian Justice, but seem'd to approve it by his Silence. Ye Nabob, effeminate Misogyne that he be, took great Delight in ye Lapidation of these poor Drabs; and 'tis gossipt amongst ye Natives that ye*

[4] Hámid; *Mu'ásir-i-'Umr.*
[5] *Orme Journal.*

> Mentula of Sabut Jung is in ye Fundament of Mahomet Ally, to which unseemly Observation I can but say in Sooth that R. C. be not averse futuere [to fuck] ye Goose that lays ye Golden Eggs.

(Apparently, if Orme and Rae are accurate, the native accounts confuse the gatekeeper with the fort commandant.)

Writing from Trichinopoly, Captain Jack Dalton observed that "The French will never be quiet, tho' we often thrash 'em heartily." To which Clive responded: "The Taking of Covelong & Chingleput has put the Nabob in possession of All the Carnatick to the North of the Penner [River]. The French seem quiet enough!" [6]

On October 9, at a consultation of the Madras Council, it is recorded that "Capt. Clive complain'd [by letter] of Want of Health, and desired to return: which, as he had executed his Plan, was granted." [7] Captain Clive marched back to Madras with flying colors; and thus his "glorious campaign," as the governor called it, came to a fateful conclusion.

[6] *Orme Papers.*
[7] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*

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MARRIAGE

The affair began when Maskelyne showed Clive a beautiful miniature he had just received from England. Clive was impressed. "Who was she?" he wanted to know.

"My sister Peggy," Maskelyne replied.

Clive urged him to invite her to India, proposing to marry her. Maskelyne protested that wedlock would be a padlock for a soldier like Clive.

Clive replied that he would hazard it.

Margaret Maskelyne was sixteen when she arrived in Madras to visit with her big brother Edmund—and to meet the far-famed Captain Robert Clive, whose bold letters were so "uncommon provocative." She had sailed to India with ten other marriageable young

ladies—"spins," they were called, in abbreviation of "spinster"—who were seeking romance and adventure in that fabled land during their dreamy transition from girlhood to womanhood, "Matches in this Country generally proving so vastly superior to what are made in Europe." [1]

While in the field (March-July, 1752) Clive was kept fully posted by friends at Madras and Fort St. David. One informed him in mid-June, "There are 11 Ladies coming out," naming them all—"and Miss Maskelyne, Your Friend's Sister." His pulse quickened when he read this. "However, I would advize You to guard Your Heart well against Them; as I don't doubt but after such a Campaign as You have had, these Beauties will have a wonderfull Effect upon You." [2]

On July 1, Dalton penned from Trichinopoly to "Dear Beauty": "By this time, I reckon you are able to give One an Account of the new-arrived Angells. By God, 'twould be a good Joke if your Countenance was to smite one of 'em & You were to commit Matrimony! I should, however, be concern'd at it: as it would put me out of all Hopes of the Pleasure I propose myself in company with You in Covent Garden [a London theater district teeming with brothels; whence "Covent Garden abbess" (procuress), "Covent Garden nun" (prostitute), and "Covent Garden ague" (venereal disease)], &c." [3] Receiving no reply, Jack wrote again on the twenty-sixth:

> *What can be the Meaning I can never have the Pleasure of a Line from you? You now & then favour'd me with one when you had Infinity of Business on your Hands, and now you neglect me when you have no other Employ than gallanting the Ladies & jovially entertaining your Friends. I hear that you keep one of the best Houses in Madrass! . . . A Rascal of a Vackeel* [native envoy] *that came from Pondicherry entertain'd the Nabob* [Muhammed *'Alí*] *& Moraree-row* [*Murárí Ráo*] *with a plausible Account of your being Clink'd: which made us uneasy, tho' it had not the Colour of the Truth. However, these Reports only serve to do you Honour, as it is manifest by 'em how sensible the Enemy are of how much Consequence your Life is to The Cause. . . .*

[1] *Maskelyne Papers.*
[2] *Clive Papers.*
[3] *Ibid.*

P.S.—The Swarthy World here had spread a Report that You were on the Point of committing Matrimony, but Maskelyne has undeceived me in that Particular. Pray tell, is M. recover'd (mentally, I mean) from his Circumcision? He will not mention it to me in Writing, as if it was a great Secret. The Nabob, who has taken to me quite Royally, has ask'd me to become a Mussulman & so suffer Mutilation: "seeing that your great Friend, Sawbut Jung Bahawder [Clive], is circumcized"; but, tho' not a practicing Christian, I can not see losing my Skin on that Account! Remember me to Maskelyne.[4]

Robert and Margaret met as fate willed, and fell in love, and were betrothed on the eve of Clive's expedition against the twin strongholds. That was characteristic of the amorous dash of the eighteenth century, when "Blessed is the Wooing that's not long a-doing!" These were the suggestive lines Clive sent his fiancée from his field quarters:

What is Love?—Well I wot!
Love is a Thing the Like is not:
It is a Prick, It is a Sting;
It is a pretty, Pretty Thing:
It is a Fire, It is a Coal
Whose Flame creeps in at every Hole.[5]

Sunday morning, February 18, 1753. Robert and Margaret were married in the little chapel at Fort St. George. Dalton wrote: "I don't doubt that a Series of Health, long Life & Content will attend this prudent Step: which you know, my dear Friend, are the Only things to be covetted." [6] Rae also wrote:

M. de Montaigne rightly advized that a Wife ought not to be so greedily enamour'd of her Husband's Foreparts, that she can not endure to see him turn his Back, if Occasion be. It is to be hoped that C's Marriage will have an asswaging Effect upon his extravagant Senses, and that Mrs. C. will tame ye Beast by her Womanly Charm & Forbearance. One pronounces this Match a Good Turn on C's part, and 'tis hoped he'll reform by it. If not, ye poor Girl hath much Anguish to endure.

[4] *Maskelyne Papers* (Orme's copy, *Clive Papers*, omits the postscript).
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Clive Papers.*

Nervous energy and hemp pills had kept a dragged-out captain on his feet during those last months of fighting; and now, after repeated engagements in the marriage bed, Clive was ready for a long rest.[7] A honeymoon at home, in Merrie London Towne, was his wife's wish; so Clive begged and was bestowed an unlimited leave of absence in recognition of his meritorious services to the Honourable Company.

When he gave up drugs, in deference to Margaret, Clive's nerves were at the point of exhaustion. He suffered from epileptoid convulsions or "fever-fits," as they were then called. On February 13, five days before the wedding, it was entered into the Madras records that "Capt. Rob't Clive's Health is so bad that We have granted him Leave to take Passage for England." [8]

Bidding adieu to India's spicy shores, the newlyweds sailed with the trade winds of March 23. Governor Morse's farewell speech stirred a wife's pride in her husband: "Robert Clive, you were foremost to lead the English flag to victory. Your example hath shaken us out of the stupor in which we lay until you conquered Arcot. The fame of British arms in India rests on your victories." [9]

[7] *Rae Journal.*
[8] *Fort St. David MS. Records.*
[9] Rae.

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THE CONQUERING HERO

It was many a year since an unknown and lonely lad had gone out to India to clerk for John Company. Then the Lilies of France were emblazoned over all of Southern India. But the clerk had turned to soldiering, rose like a meteor, struck like a thunderbolt, and made the English the masters. His energy and genius turned stumbling-blocks into steppingstones. He was indeed *Sábit Jang Behádur*, Greatly Daring in War.

And he was modestly rich: evidence (like marriage) of a change for the better, his father thought. Aye, the "precious rascal" had productive instincts and ambition after all! In the past few years, with the help of Orme, Clive had amassed some £50,000, much of which he sent home in diamonds, entrusting the rest to financial agent Levi Moses for investment in India. "Well, the booby had some sense after all!" Richard Clive remarked, noting how the E.I.C. Court of Directors had written to the Governor of Fort St. David of "the great Regard" they had "for the Merit of Captain Clive, to whose Courage and Conduct the late Turn in our Affairs hath been mainly owing." [1] The old shyster had even written: "As your Conduct & Bravery is become ye Publick Talk of ye Nation, and this is ye Time to encrease your Fortune, make Use of ye present Opportunity before you quit ye Country." [2]

Before leaving India, Clive had penned to Lawrence at St. David that "the Governour [Morse] sent for & inform'd me the Nabob [Muhammed 'Alí] had made me a Present of 40,000 Rupees," but that said present had apparently disappeared. It would seem that Saunders advised Morse that Clive had already been amply rewarded for his services to the "country government" as well as to the Company, and that the *nazr* (customary gift) was impounded by Council. Lawrence replied: "I'm not surprized that Envy has made a Scratch at you. 'Tis no more than what You ought to expect after so much deserved Good Fortune, if you consider ye World we live in, which abounds with Snarllers. However, let 'em snarl on, since they can't bite." [3]

This seemingly unimportant affair was the first rumble of a growing storm of protest against the acceptance of gifts by Company servants from Indian rulers. Involving possible conflict of interest, such license to pocket gifts appeared unethical to those who did not wish their motives to seem other than purely mercantile. At any rate, Jack Dalton wrote: "You have deserved your Money, Clive, and every honest Englishman will think so; besides, I could prove that no Man, unless a Soldier beloved by the Country-people & either in Command himself or highly in Favour with the Commander, can ever make

[1] *Orme Papers; Malcolm's Anecdotes; Fort St. David MS. Records.*
[2] *Clive Papers.*
[3] *Orme/Clive Papers.*

Half so much of the Employ as You have done on the same Terms."[4]

It was a decade or so since an ill-natured lawyer laid eyes on the ornery son he had packed off to the Land of Regrets, there to be made a man of or to die. Well, the "black sheep" had come home a man of fame and wealth to receive a conquering hero's welcome. He became, at once, London's new social lion, Clive the Nabob. Fleet Street ballyhoo'd his triumphs, Mayfair buzzed over his prowess, Parliament eulogized his glory. The E.I.C. Court of Directors honored him as "General" Clive, then hailed him as "Hero of Arcot" and "Saviour of the Company."

William Pitt, the "Great Commoner," styled Clive "a Heaven-born General whose Resolution would charm the King of Prussia [Frederick the Great] and whose Presence of Mind has astonish'd the Indies."[5] Lords Hardwicke, Barrington, and Holderness (His Majesty's Secretaries of State) sought Clive's opinions concerning the military and political relationship of the English and French East India Companies. In fact, England's greatest statesmen (from Pelham and Newcastle to Murray and Fox) flocked to confer with "that Man not born for a Desk" who had humbled Dupleix and frustrated the imperialistic ambitions of France in India.

Wined and dined by "the choice and master spirits of the age," Clive wrote to Maskelyne: "I find, by Experience, that a Man is not the farther from Preferment by paying a Visit to his Native Country."[6] And so, while recruiting his strength, Clive counseled the politicians and toured the social circles.

David Garrick, the "Admirable Crichton" of Drury Lane Theatre, showed him a farce lampooning the lecherous Charles II:

> *Henceforth, John Bull, set the Nation free:*
> *Let Conscience have its Right and Liberty;*
> *I do proclaim that Bugg'ry may be us'd*
> *Thro' all the Land, so Cunte be not abus'd;*
> *Thus, in the Zenith of my Lust, I reign:*
> *I eat to swive, and swive to eat again;*
> *Let other Monarchs, who their Sceptres bear*
> *To keep their Subjects less in Love than Fear,*

[4] *Ibid.*
[5] Chatham (William Pitt), Lord: *Papers.*
[6] *Clive Papers.*

Be Slaves to Crowns: My Nation shall be free:
My Pintle only shall my Sceptre be;
My Laws shall act more Pleasure than Command,
And with my Prick I'll govern all the Land;
I'll then invade and bugger all the Gods,
And drain the Spring of their immortal Cods,
Then make them rub their Arses till they cry,
"You've frigg'd us out of Immortality!" [7]

Richard ("Beau") Nash, England's *arbiter elegantiae* and "King of Bath," asked the nabob if he had "turned Turk"; to which Clive answered, "Only in the flesh. The Church may still claim my immortal soul." [8]

Samuel Johnson, sovereign wit of tavern and coffeehouse, confided to Clive, "the company of actresses is most distracting to the delicate sensibilities of a harmless drudge. As I once said to Mr. Garrick: 'I'll come no more behind your scenes, David; for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities.' " ("Drury Lane ague," contracted from "Drury Lane vestals," was proverbial.) [9]

Satirist Tobias George Smollett, whose picaresque *Roderick Random* had caused a sensation, remarked to Clive: "I think, for my part, one half of the nation is mad—and the other not very sound." Clive replied: "By God, sir, England now holds the key to India. Though this be madness, yet there is method in it!" [10]

King George's youngest son, General William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland—dubbed "Billy the Butcher" for his brutal suppression of the Jacobite Rebellion of '45, and "The Booby of Fontenoy" for his questionable military prowess in the recent European war—was a notorious debauchee. Having commended Clive for his amorous exploits in India, he ventured to boast of his own venereal victories: "Taking a wench is like to taking a fortress, begad. One batters the bastion, then storms the breach. I delivered nigh five-times-five assaults on the feminine defenses of Flanders. Was such artillery known to Samson?" [11]

[7] *Maskelyne Papers* (from John Wilmot's notorious satire, *Sodom*).
[8] *Malcolm's Anecdotes.*
[9] *Ibid.*; (see Boswell's *Life of Johnson*).
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid.*

The Clives loved London: its glamor, its charm, its individuality. "When a man is tired of London," Dr. Johnson opined, "he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford." [12]

London was a kaleidoscope of contrasts. While John and Charles Wesley were winning Methodist converts in sinful Mayfair, Elizabeth Chudleigh (self-styled Duchess of Kingston) became England's "whore extraordinary" and minced along the Mall in gowns more revealing than nudity. She was His seventy-year-old Britannic Majesty's latest and greatest sensation, in fulfillment of a promise he made to dying Queen Caroline, who had urged him to marry again: "No; I shall have mistresses!" While George Frederick Handel (old and blind) still conducted his operas and oratorios at the Royal Academy of Music, young Joshua Reynolds (stone-deaf) eked out an existence by painting portraits in St. Martin's Lane. Taking in geniuses and hacks, statesmen and thugs, parsons and pederasts, London was the omnium gatherum of England.

The Clives lived sumptuously in Queen's Square, off St. James's Park, and gadded about in an elegant chaise attended by liveried footmen. Clive boasted a splendid stable, with horseflesh befitting a nabob, and his black servant boy was bedizened in a magnificent turban and red satin outfit. Clive now sported a fashionable bobwig, and liked to tell every new acquaintance that "the Brahmans are struck with a fit of horror at seeing a European with his pate tricked out in hair that may well have been lifted from a leper or a corpse, or at best from a pariah or prostitute! 'How dare you defile your head?' they say, and say I: 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread, and fortune favors fools.' " [13]

Though Robert and Margaret hobnobbed with the English aristocracy, they still bore the brand of *nouveaux riches:* "upstart crows decked in peacock feathers." Clive was now all the rage, but in a society that turned to new idols. That bubble Reputation wasn't long in breaking. To keep his place in the sun, Clive made a bid for Parliament. *If money go before, all ways do lie open.* And four influential friends helped see to it—for a price.

One was Secretary of War Henry Fox, later First Baron Holland. Another, William Murray, destined First Earl of Mansfield and Lord

[12] Boswell, James: *Life of Samuel Johnson.*
[13] *Malcolm's Anecdotes* (see Dubois: *Hindu Manners,* &c.).

Chief Justice of England, was then Attorney General and Leader of the House of Commons. Both gentlemen were wirepullers of the E.I.C. in Parliament. A third was the Most Reverend Thomas Herring, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, who did not dispute Clive's assertion: "Believe me, m'Lud, bribes buy both gods and mortals. Be it better or be it worse, please you the man that bears the purse." [14] His Grace, whose unregenerate son had given him a bad name by publishing bawdy ballads in Holywell Street (center of London pornography), agreed to exert influence on the nabob's behalf. Finally there was John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich, Clive's chief campaign manager and boon companion. Both, like Byron, believed " 'Tis pleasant purchasing our fellow creatures; and all are to be sold." They also appreciated that man is a gaming animal, and (with Blake) that

> *The whore and gambler, by the State*
> *Licensed, build that nation's fate.*

Both had daredeviltry in common, a gusto for reckless sport, and both were playing for high political stakes.

"Politics are now nothing more than a means of rising in the world," Sam Johnson commented dryly.[15] Trade brought the wealth of the Indies to England, and with it a new breed of men: the "nabobs," self-made millionaires. These "would-be gentlemen," "pigs in clover" and "mushroom plutocrats," perpetrated the notorious spoils system of boroughmongering and other electioneering maneuvers that turned eighteenth-century English politics into a licensed travesty.

"You must first make a figure there [in Parliament] if you would make a figure in your country," said Lord Chesterfield, who taught "the morals of a whore," according to Johnson; and several nabobs took his advice, buying seats at Westminster Hall by outbidding the aristocracy. When Chesterfield tried to purchase a House membership for his natural son at the usual rate of £2500, he met with, "Sorry, no vacancies." Nabobs were bidding from £3000 to £5000 for the honor.

"All those men have their price," Sir Robert Walpole once remarked of Parliament, and declared in a speech before the startled

[14] *Intrigues of a Nabob.*
[15] Boswell.

lords of the land: "I know the price of every man in this House, except three." [16] And there was the proverbial retort of a merchant to a squire, when told that he was not a gentleman: "No, sir, but I can *buy* a gentleman!" The sudden ascent of mercantile or middle-class nobility, a new elite that bought titles and rank once exclusively hereditary, posed a fatal threat to royalty. But the tide of capitalism was on the rise, and the aristocracy had to swim with it or drown.

Political patronage and general corruption are the afflictions of any affluent society, wherein morality is on sale; hence, Horace Walpole's word to a friend that "You will hear little News from England but of Robberies." A cynicism of self-sufficiency, bred by the *bourgeoisie*, had spread disrespect for law and ethics. It was the kind of pseudo-sophisticated licentiousness into which the Romans had fallen in their age of opulence. With the old nobility catering to the *nouveaux riches* and a crime wave swelling the underworld, the era was marked by refined roguery at the top and crude criminality at the bottom. No one was safe on the streets of London after dark. The same freedom that allowed one man to loot the Orient with impunity apparently permitted another (by inference) to rob his fellow countrymen. There was nothing shameful in being a criminal, so long as one did not get caught. And if one did—well, "oil of palms" allowed one to slip through iron bars or even the noose.

Clive, no idealist, used his opportunities and advantages. What he did was done by the best of his contemporaries. He entered Politicks to safeguard his fame and fortune from the autocracy on the one hand and the moneyocracy on the other.

Lord Sandwich was nicknamed "Jemmy Twitcher," after a cunning crook in Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, because of his notoriety as a briber, boodler, and jobber. And no mean cardsharp was he! "Jem" couldn't stop gambling to dine decently; so he came to the table ready-prepared for uninterrupted, round-the-clock pleasure—with slices of cold roast beef slapped between slices of rye bread. Thus the "sandwich" was born.

Too infamous to have a friend,
Too bad for bad men to commend
Or good to name.

[16] *Parliamentary History of England.*

Sandwich was the manipulator Clive used to crash the gates of Parliament. Bucking Prime Minister the Duke of Newcastle's candidate for a seat in the Lower House, Lord Sandwich and Mr. Fox nominated Captain Clive as representative for the "rotten borough" of St. Michael in Cornwall. "Jemmy Twitcher" held more strings than the powerful Duke. It took most of Clive's fortune, but when the votes were in, after a fierce election made memorable by the genius of Hogarth, Clive stood at the head of the poll.

But the Prime Minister was a sore loser. He not only contested Clive's shady election; he tongue-lashed the Secretary of War, Harry Fox, for aiding and abetting "that mushroom nabob." Clive had garnered thirty votes, his opponent twenty-five. It was Newcastle's contention that one of the tellers, Thomas Potter (a witty associate of firebrand John Wilkes), had been paid by Sandwich to count five votes twice. A war of words raged in the House of Commons for several weeks, with Fox, Sandwich, and Murray arrayed against Newcastle and his flunkies. When the muckraking and mudslinging ended in a new vote (March 24, 1755), Clive was unseated by a narrow margin.

There were only moths now in Clive's moneybags, and his pride was in his pocket. He had learned a hard lesson. "Farewell, Polite Society & Seat in Parliament! Thou art too dear for my possessing." [17]

Clive wrote to Maskelyne: "I am leaving the Civilian in London, and am returning to India as a Soldier. Suffice it to say, my Parliamentary Adventure surpast all the Vicissitudes & Surprizes in a Life which hath had no lack of 'em!" [18] And to cousin-in-law Jack Walsh, his agent at Madras: "Want of Ambition hath never been charged to me. If I could have got the Gov't of Madrass, I do assure You I would have set out the last Year from Death's Door." [19] He had written only a few days before: "My Seat in Parliament hath caused me infinite Trouble, and is likely to cause me much more; and till that be decided, India must not be thought of." [20] Now, the thought of India haunted his every moment.

The day after his defeat in Parliament, having wasted a year and a

[17] *Maskelyne Papers.*
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Orme Papers.*
[20] *Ibid.*

half in England, Clive called on the E.I.C. Court of Directors to send him back to India at £70 per annum. He was thereupon commissioned ("By His Majesty's Command") "Lieutenant-colonel of Foot in the East Indies," then appointed Governor of Fort St. David (in place of the retired Mr. Saunders) and Deputy Governor of Madras. His loss was more than covered by this lucky strike, but the army commission was to cause much partisan controversy in days to come.

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THE PIRATES

Released from a three-year stretch in the Bastille, Admiral La Bourdonnais launched an effective smear campaign against Marquis Dupleix. Joined by Colonel Law, he denounced the dictator as a madman whose bloody machinations and lust for personal power had destroyed the French East India Company. King Louis agreed. He dispatched a *Compagnie* stooge, one Charles-Robert Godeheu, with orders to arrest Dupleix, ship him back to France, and assume authority as Governor General of Pondicherry "with a sincere intention of endeavoring to pacify the troubles in India." [1]

Marquis and Madame Dupleix left India, forever, in early October of 1754. *Le grand jeu*, "the great game," was over at last. Within two years, Jeanne died of pneumonia in a Parisian hospital; and Joseph-François gave up the ghost a decade later in poverty and obscurity, his journal a book of lamentations: "I have sacrificed my youth, my fortune, my life, to enrich my nation in Asia. . . . I am treated as the vilest of mankind. I am in the most deplorable indigence. . . . I am in misery!"

Ráví Tevallá Hámid observed prophetically in his chronicle:

> *The French have dismissed Dupleix. As a result of this, they will lose their honor and their possessions; for now the Indian people see that the French are neither so powerful nor so generous as they*

[1] Martineau.

wanted to make us believe. . . . This clever woman [Ján Bégam] made her husband pay dearly for the use she had been to him with her perfect knowledge of Indian psychology and her remarkable talent for political intrigue.

Dupleix had achieved a certain greatness by the range of his ambition. Greater still was his wife, his *alter ego*, one of the most extraordinary (and mysterious) women in history. If the two of them take on an evil image, it is nonetheless of mythical magnitude. The romance defies reality. Their memory deserves neither scorn nor pity. They tempted destiny; they upset empires; they gambled and lost.

Godeheu virtually abandoned what was left of Dupleix' private empire by signing a treaty of peace and neutrality with the British East India Company on September 29, 1754. Article One of this "Suspension of Arms, during which each Nation is to remain in their present Condition," stipulated that "The two Companies (English and French) shall renounce for ever all Moorish Government and Dignity, and shall never interfere in any Difference that may arise between the Princes of the Country." Moreover, "Neither Nation shall be allow'd to procure, during the Truce, any new Grant or Cession." [2] "By this treaty," writes historian-economist James Mill, "everything for which they had been contending was gained by the English; every advantage of which they had come into possession was given up by the French."

Though *Jean Compagnie* was decidedly disabled, Clive advised the Court of Directors from Bombay: "I should not be over-scrupulous, or wanting in a little Chicanery towards a Nation that never made any Treaties at all but with a View of breaking them; but really, at present, I think any Infringement whatever would not be agreeable to the Maxims of sound Policy." [3] Apparently, when infringement would prove agreeable to maxims of sound policy, John Company should play the treaty-breaker!

The Maratha desperado Tulájí Angriyá, archpirate of the Arabian Sea and scourge of the Malabar Coast, made his lair at Gheriah, a fortified crag some seventy-five miles south of Bombay. From there his buccaneer fleet preyed upon both Eastern and European vessels

[2] *E.I.C. Records.*
[3] *Ibid.*

and threatened to destroy Company commerce in Western India. This pirate empire had been founded by Tulájí's father (Kánhají Angriyá), when he served as admiral of Shivají the Great's Maratha fleet. But the son, unlike the sire, paid allegiance to no one. He plundered and enslaved his own people as readily as Muslim and Christian, and had roused the wrath of the Maratha ruler Rámají Panth.

"As to the desire of possessing what is another's," the seahawk wrote to the Governor of Bombay, "I do not find your merchants exempt from this sort of ambition; for such is the way of the world. Ráma does not favor without taking from one to give to another. Whether this is right or not, who is able to determine? Your Excellency is pleased to write that he who follows war for the sake of war will sooner or later find cause to repent, of which I suppose Your Excellency has found proof; for we are not always victorious, nor always unfortunate." [4]

The governor, Mr. Richard Bourchier, declared: "The Peishwah [*Péshvá*, Maratha ruler] (Rámají Panth) has asked us to aid him in an attack upon Gheriah, and we must do so if for no other reason than to protect our own shipping. 'Sblood! The plunders and ravages of this picaroon have cost us a pretty penny, and have harassed our native allies to no end. Mr. Clive, we should like you and Mr. Watson to crush Angria at all hazards." [5]

Vice-Admiral the Honourable Charles Watson was the son of Dr. John Watson, Prebendary of Westminster Abbey, and a favorite nephew of the First Lord of the Admiralty. He was moonfaced and beefy, with bulging eyes and a pouting mouth, and he had won his epaulets by "polishing up the handle of the big front door." His temper, for the scion of a churchman, left much to be desired.

Gheriah was considered impregnable, but not by Clive who overcame Watson's hesitations. But he had further trouble with Watson who, as commander in the Royal Navy, insisted that three quarters of the expected booty should go into the King's coffers and his own pocket, and refused to sail except on these terms. Clive insisted on a fifty-fifty division between the Company and the Royal Navy and by

[4] *Bombay MS. Records* (in Marathi).
[5] *Angria Tulagee.*

his unyielding persistence got his way. He went so far as to threaten to carry out the expedition on his own.

On February 11, 1756, Admiral Watson's twelve-warship squadron skimmed into the harbor of Gheriah. On board was Colonel Clive with eight hundred redcoats and a thousand sepoys. On the land approaches the multitudinous Maratha army, commanded by Rámají Panth, was encamped.

From the fo'c'sle of Watson's flagship, H.M.S. *Kent*, Clive surveyed the target through his telescope. The fortress of Gheriah crouched on a promontory of black rock rising sheer from the water to a height of fifty feet. The pirates called it *Vijayadurga*, the "Fort of Victory." The defenses consisted of two lines of walls with round towers, the inner parapet overlooking the outer. Standing about a mile up the mouth of a river, and jutting to the right, the precipice was joined to the land by a sandy slip, beyond which lay the town. The ten-vessel pirate fleet rode at anchor off this neck.

Spotting the English armada, Tulájí Angriyá ordered his shore batteries to open fire—then sent an envoy to Rámají Panth, begging his fellow Maratha to accept a handsome ransom for Gheriah, thus raising the siege by land and allowing Tulájí to take to the sea.

Rámají turned a deaf ear. Why accept a piddling bribe, when all the plunder of the fort was within his grasp—provided he could get to it before the English! Tulájí's envoy was seized as a "spy," and "a satyrique Number of Ramajee's Body-guard bugger'd him most unmercifully." [6]

Tulájí ran up a red flag of defiance to signalize "no surrender." Ranging his men-o'-war to cover the mortar sloops and frigates, Watson anchored within a hundred yards of the promontory, in face of haphazard enemy fire. A signal gun roared on the flagship and thunderous broadsides erupted from 150 pieces of ordnance. While man-o'-war shells blasted the fort, the Admiral's bomb ketches lobbed red-hot shot into the pirate vessels and the town, setting both ablaze. In less than an hour, a fleet that for half a century had terrorized the Malabar Coast was devoured by flames.

Before nightfall, the enemy's guns were completely silenced. However, no white flag was hoisted; so under cover of darkness, Clive

[6] *Ibid.*

landed his troops and took position between the besieging Marathas and the fort, much to the disappointment of Rámají Panth when he saw them the next morning.

Clive again summoned the pirates to surrender, threatening to renew the bombardment, storm Gheriah, and give no quarter. No answer forthcoming, the barrage was opened anew. Within half an hour a white flag fluttered above the battered walls.

Clive advanced to take possession of the fort; but no further sign of surrender greeted him, nor were the gates flung open. "God damn 'em!" he snarled. "They'll not toy with me!" [7] He waved his hat to Watson, ordered his occupation detail to withdraw, and the shooting began anew.

Just when Gheriah was about to be blown to cinders, Tulájí Angriyá shouted over the gaping ramparts to Clive: "*Ham jhukté hayn! ham jhukté hayn! Áo! áo!*" (We surrender! we surrender! Come in! come in!) [8]

> *The gods mine unrelenting breast hath steel'd,*
> *And cursed me with a mind that cannot yield.*

Clive marched into Gheriah fort (Vijayadurga) with a guard of sixty sepoys, and Tulájí Angriyá and the Malabar pirates laid down their weapons and filed out as prisoners of war. Down came the red flag; up went the Union Jack: banner that "braved, a thousand years, the battle and the breeze."

The "take" was tremendous: two hundred guns, tons of munitions and supplies, and £150,000 worth of loot. Half was appropriated by Watson and the Crown, the other half by Clive and the Company. Clive remarked: "They well deserve to have that know the strongest and surest way to get!" [9] His personal share of the haul amounted to at least £5000, a splendid anniversary gift for his wife.

Having done nothing to earn it, and having shown himself a sharper, Rámají Panth got no more than a thank-you and the much-hated person of Tulájí Angriyá. Upon this prize captive was Maratha vengeance wreaked, for he was gelded like a stallion.

[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.* (quaint orthography of the anonymous account: *Hum jookty hyn; ow.*)
[9] *Ibid.*

> *A Chord being tied tightly about his Scrotum, Strangulation soon caused the Bag to shrivel and his Testicules to drop off; whereat, as a vile Hidgerah* [hijrá, "deballed one"] *or Eunuque abused by Sodomites, the Marottahs* [Marathas] *confined their greatest Gallows-bird in Chains to an Hill-fortress Dungeon; for which the English were well-satisfied, as thirteen half-naked and wretched-looking Europeans (taken as Slaves by the Pyrates) had admitted being forcibly sodomized and thuswise vilely abused by their Captors, and as the bloodthirsty Sea-hawks had also raped and held to Ransom a Number of White Women, the while using their Children as miserable Catamites.*[10]

London attorney William Smith King wrote to his chief client on December 27, 1756:

> *The News of your Success could not have reach'd England at a Season more advantageous for the Increase of your Reputation: a Season in which there was a general Clamour & Indignation over the Ignominy that had been brought on our Arms by the Losses in the Mediterranean & North America. . . . You will easily imagine how opportune & gratefull the Taking of Gheriah was, notwithstanding the Distance of the Place & its not being so generally known.*[11]

Waiting for the breakup of the northeast monsoon, Colonel and Mrs. Clive sailed with the fleet (April 27, 1756) to Fort St. David. They no sooner set foot in Government House, where Clive was to devote himself to the routine duties of governor, than all Bengal burst into flames of rebellion: a conflagration that would etch the words *Clive* and *Plassey* in world history.

[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Orme Papers.*

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THE BLACK HOLE

The golden gates of India's Garden of Eden had been opened to John Company by Emperor Sháh Jehán. Small trading-posts sprang up along the Hooghly River, in the Ganges delta; and in 1690, Job Charnock and his pioneer band of merchant-adventurers established the fortified settlement of Calcutta, "London of the East." Within a few years, thanks to an alliance of British and Indian enterprise, this "miserable Trading-fort" boomed to a "City of Palaces."

The Hindu population of Bengal supported the English when they opposed, and eventually abolished, the extortionate *jizyeh* or double tax levied on Infidels by the Mughal authorities. Before the advent of British influence, debtors and tax dodgers had been terrorized, tortured, forcibly circumcised, or otherwise mishandled and mutilated by Muslim fanatics. Christian charity, enforced with aggressive eloquence, ended the reign of terror. The Vaishya or mercantile-agricultural castes, no longer under the Mughal heel, flourished in the stronghold of Company protection. The Sudra or proletarian classes, in passive revolt against the social and economic tyranny of Brahmanism or priestcraft (which opposed the political and religious tyranny of Islam), regarded the English as messiahs or super-Brahmans come to liberate them from a double oppression. Indeed, every segment of Hindu society had something to gain from "the luxury of doing good" introduced by the utilitarian *Angrézí*.

When an excessive imposition of the *jizyeh* or "shearing" triggered an outbreak of hostilities with Emperor 'Aurangzeyb, the Court of Directors nevertheless cautioned their zealous servants in Bengal: "Our ultimate End is Peace; for . . . Our Natures are averse to Bloodshed & Rapine: . . . but We have noe Remedie left, but either to desert Our Trade, or We must draw ye Sworde His Maj'ty hath entrusted Us with to vindicate ye Rights & Honour of ye English

Nation in India." [1] Charnock was to be their guiding spirit, according to what he had written on the eve of the foundation of Calcutta: "When once We come to be settled thoro'ly, ye Country People will flock to Us to live under Our Gov'm't, ye Nature of which they are well-acquaynted with, and soe vast a Disparitie betweene ye Lenity of Ours & ye Tyrannie of their owne, of ye which We have a pregnant Instance in their present Flocking to Us in sich Abundance as they Dayly do." [2] British protection and patronage were the Hindu's armor against the Mughal cudgel. They also provided steppingstones to *svaráj*, self-rule.

In 1716, Emperor Ferrukhsiyer was healed of venereal disease by Dr. William Hamilton, a young civil surgeon attached to the English embassy at Delhi. This providential cure procured for the Company, in the following year, a firmán or imperial charter allowing duty-free trade in Bengal for an annual tribute of only ten thousand rupees. Were it not for the greed of Neváb Sháisteh Khán, the English may well have conducted themselves as honorable gentlemen traders. Sháisteh, protesting against the issuance of a *firmán* that would reduce his yearly revenue from about one million rupees to about thirty thousand, denounced the English as "a company of base, quarreling unbelievers and foul, conniving dealers." [3] But he could not get the charter rescinded.

Sháisteh's bigotry and animosity engendered cynical defiance. Company servants abused their privileges. The *dastak*, permitting British merchants free passage through tollgates, was sold to Indian merchants at exorbitant rates. Until it was brought under control, this racket nearly ruined the Bengali revenue system. According to a contemporary observer, "the Injustice to the Moors" also consisted in that "we levied large Duties upon Goods brought into our Districts from the very People that permitted us to trade Custom-free, and by Numbers of Impositions framed to raise the Company's Revenues (such as Taxes on Marriages and Prostitution, &c.) caused eternal Clamour and Complaints against us at Court." [4]

In 1740, after Nádir Sháh had sacked Delhi and seized the Mughal

[1] *Bengal MS. Records.*
[2] *E.I.C. Records.*
[3] Selímulláh Khán, Shaykh: *Táríkh-i-Bengál.*
[4] *Transactions in India from 1756 to 1783.*

Empire, an Afghan adventurer named Mír 'Alíverdí Khán assassinated the Viceroy of Bengal, Serferáz Khán, and conquered the country. Though he came to power like any other Muslim usurper, 'Alíverdí surprised everyone. His rule was not despotic, and he won the reputation of being the most high-minded Neváb Bengal had ever known. The good soldier was also a good administrator, ruling not by *argumentum baculinum* or "club law" but by *laissez faire* tempered by *lex talionis*.[5] In the words of Orme, "His private Life was very different from the usual Manners of a Mahometan Prince in Indostan; for he was always extreamly temperate, had no Pleasures, kept no Seraglio, and always lived the Husband of one Wife." [6]

On April 10, 1756, Neváb 'Alíverdí Khán died of a slow dose of poison. During his lifetime Europeans in and around Calcutta were on good terms with each other and their native neighbors. 'Alíverdí believed in "Live and let live," and dealt fairly with all. Unlike his Mughal cousins in the South, he avoided intrigues for power. He valued the European traders, for their commerce enriched his land and his people. But such an ideal state of affairs was too good to last, for "What's come to perfection perishes."

The seed of corruption was the dead Neváb's favorite grandson and heir apparent, Mírzá Mehmúd 'Alí Khán Behádur: *Sirájuddawleh*, "Sun of the State."

It began in 1752, when the future "Beast of Bengal" was thirteen years old. The Marathas, having ravaged the Carnatic, sought still richer prospects in the northeast. Apprised of this threat, the English begged permission of 'Alíverdí to strengthen and expand their fortifications at Calcutta. The Neváb replied: "You are a merchant community. What have you to do with forts and garrisons? I am not dead yet. I am still here to give you protection from dangers and disturbances." [7] Satisfied that he could buy off the Maratha freebooters with a tribute of a fourth of the revenue, 'Alíverdí sat on his hands while the English (not so certain that the Marathas would accept it) went ahead with their defense plans. The wrathful Neváb declared, "I shall enforce obedience and good order!" and marched on Calcutta to exact a heavy fine.

[5] Yúsuf 'Alí Khán, Saiyed: *Ahvál-i-Mehabbat Jang.*
[6] *Military Transactions.*
[7] Yúsuf 'Alí.

On August 25 of '52, Robert Orme wrote to Clive: "The Nabob is coming down with All his Cannon, and with an Intent to bully all the Settlements out of a large Sum of Money. Clive, 'twould be a good Deed to swinge the Old Dog. I don't speak at Random when I say that the Company must think seriously of it, or 'twill not be worth their while to trade in Bengall." [8] He later added: "Heaven help us should the Morattoes [Marathas] invade Bengall! 'Tis reported that no fewer than 10 or a Dozen of 'em will rape a beautifull Woman, that they cut off the Cullions [testicles] of Men & embugger Children of both Sexes by Gangs, thereafter selling 'em into Slavery; and such Satyrs they be, that while one abuses his Victim, the others (says an Eye-witness) await their Turn by tossing off [masturbating] like a Parcell of Baboons!" [9]

The Maratha incursion proved a blunted thunderbolt. Few were plundered by the few that attacked; no one was raped, mutilated, or enslaved; and casualties were inconsiderable. But only because the English were ready-prepared. Whereupon the Nevàb thought better of their preparation. However, his fears of European military might were well founded. "On the pretense of a private contest between their kings," he wrote, "the English and French have divided and conquered the Deccan." [10] And yet, in Bengal, had they not demonstrated their good faith by not committing the sins of the South? The Deccan lacked honest leadership and sound authority. Bengal did not.

'Alíverdí, a man of uncommon compassion, forgave the English their indiscretion and advised them not to mistake freedom for license. When his captains and counselors, loudest and most wild-eyed of whom was his pet, Sirájuddawleh, urged him to drive the Unbelievers out of Bengal, he answered philosophically: "What have the English done against me that I should do against them? Set fire to the land, and the sea shall put it out. Should I plunder the traders of my kingdom, I plunder myself; for it is trade that makes us prosperous. And remember: the Europeans are like a hive of bees. You may reap the benefit of their honey, if you are careful; but if you disturb the hive, they will sting you to death." [11] Prophetic words, falling on

[8] *Clive/Orme Papers.*
[9] *Maskelyne Papers* (also quoted in *Rae Journal*).
[10] Yúsuf 'Alí.
[11] *Ibid.*

deaf ears. Kerem 'Alí Khán, in his *Muzaffernámeh* (Book of the Conqueror), expressed the sad truth: "When the soul departed from 'Alíverdí, the goddess of fortune fled Bengal."

Zaynuddín Ahmed Khán, Governor of Patna and eldest son-in-law of Neváb 'Alíverdí, died in 1747. He left three sons, senior of whom was Mehmúd 'Alí. Having three daughters but no sons, 'Alíverdí adopted eight-year-old Mehmúd as his heir apparent. Apple of grandpa's eye, Mírzá Mehmúd 'Alí Khán assumed the royal title of *Sirájuddawleh* (Sun of the State, *Roi Soleil*) when he was officially proclaimed heir to the throne of Bengal at the age of twelve. A contemporary historian (Ghulám Husayn Khán) extols "that beauteous face of his, so renowned throughout Bengal for its symmetry and sweetness." In the bloom of pubescent youth, Sirájuddawleh's lithe form and delicate features charmed both male and female. His straight nose, sensuous lips, large lustrous eyes, glossy mustache, and arched brows were a miniaturist's delight. But behind that handsome façade lurked an ugly character. Behind his graceful poise worked an unbalanced mind. The grandfather's example of moderation held no attraction for the erratic grandson, who fell under the influence of pederastic eunuchs, oversexed slave girls, and sycophantic courtiers. Orme appraised him,

> *Born without Compassion, it was one of the Amusements of Meerza Mahmood's Childhood to torture Birds and Animals. Approaching Manhood, he order'd pregnant Women ripp'd open to satisfy his inhuman Curiosity, and had Boat-loads of People upset in the Hooghly to watch the Agonies of the Drowning. He lived in every Kind of Intemperance and Debauchery, and more especially in drinking Spirituous Liquors to an Excess, which inflamed his Passions and impair'd the little Understanding with which he was born.*[12]

Richard Becher, chief factor at Dacca, described Sirájuddawleh as "a disquieting Young Man: violent, passionate, of great Ambition tinctured with Avarice." [13] Jean Law, head of the French factory at Cossimbazar and younger brother of Jacques, knew Sirájuddawleh well enough to testify to his obsessive sadism. One episode (as related to Law by the perpetrator himself) was the torturing to death of a

[12] *Orme Journal* (also *Military Transactions*).
[13] *Orme Papers.*

famous dancing-girl from Delhi, for whom he had paid 200,000 rupees. Wearied by his adolescent demands she expressed preference for an older man. Sirájuddawleh called her a "dirty whore" (*une vilaine putain*). "A whore I am indeed!" she replied. "But dirty? Only she that aborted the likes of you can be called a 'dirty' whore." For that affront she had her tongue, nose, and breasts cut off—and was finally buried alive.[14]

Several years before 'Alíverdí's demise, which his heir helped engineer, Sirájuddawleh was plotting with the anti-European faction to eliminate all rivals of his accession. The most influential of these were two uncles, Nevázish Muhammed Khán (Governor of Dacca) and Saiyed Ahmed Khán (Governor of Purneah), both of whom were assassinated. Nevázish, murdered in December of '55, was childless. Ahmed, slain in February of '56, had one son: Shawkat Jang, who fled to Delhi.

'Alíverdí's youngest daughter and Nevázish's widow, Ghasítá Bégam, was a shrewd and lewd woman who went to all lengths to secure personal power. No sooner was her impotent husband in the grave than she flung herself into an affair with Mír Hasen Qúlí Khán, 'Alíverdí's chief adviser, and into a scheme to dispose of Sirájuddawleh in favor of Shawkat Jang. Meanwhile, Ghasítá also gave her favors to Nevázish's successor, Ráiballabh Singh. Thus, when Hasen Qúlí was found dead on his doorstep—victim of Sirájuddawleh's daggers—Ghasítá Bégam had lost nothing but a second lover.[15]

From a brat who tortured his animal pets and buggered his palace playmates, Sirájuddawleh had grown to a paranoiac sadist. One of his paranoid obsessions was John Company and Europeans in general, and it became his life's goal to drive them out of Bengal.

When he was proclaimed *Neváb-i-Bengál* (Viceroy of Bengal), Sirájuddawleh shouted to his officials: "What honor is left to us when a mere handful of traders, who have not yet learned to wash their behinds, dictate to a deputy of the Mughal Empire? In Allah's name, I shall wipe them off the face of the earth!" [16] (The Neváb's allusion to "unwashed behinds" is explained by the fact that Muslims and Hindus practiced *istinjá* or washing of the fundament after def-

[14] Law, Jean-Marie: *Journal/Mémoires.*
[15] Husayn Khán; Kerem 'Alí Khán, Mírzá: *Muzaffernámeh; Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
[16] Husayn Khán.

ecation, regarding the use of paper without water as filthy and defiling; hence the scornful term *kághez-kháneh*, "paper-closet" or outhouse, for a European.) According to Sirájuddawleh, since 1717, when Emperor Ferrukhsiyer issued the free-trade *firmán*, the British Company had defrauded the Bengal Government of approximately forty million rupees in customs duties.

Sirájuddawleh began by secretly ordering the assassination of one of his grandsire's Hindu henchmen, Rájá Ráiballabh Singh of Dacca, on false charges of treason—but allowing the Rajah's eldest son and heir, Kishandás Kumár, to escape to Calcutta with the family treasure. Sirájuddawleh then dispatched a letter to Mr. Roger Drake, Governor of Calcutta, accusing him of harboring a fugitive traitor and ordering him to hand over said traitor (with the "stolen" treasure) immediately. Governor Drake at once answered that the Hon'ble Company was not in the habit of involving itself in His Excellency's affairs, of protecting native turncoats, or of obstructing royal justice; and that Kishandás had taken refuge in the house of a Hindu merchant, one Ámíchand Mahájan, and therefore could not and would not be touched. Sirájuddawleh's envoy was turned out of Fort William "with Derision & Insolence." [17]

There followed the demand that Mr. Drake dismantle all the fortifications which he had been erecting in defiance of royal authority. The Governor was pleased to reply that he was not erecting new fortifications, but simply repairing and strengthening the old ramparts of Fort William in anticipation of a fresh outbreak of hostilities between England and France. With the French settlement of Chandernagore only some twenty miles up the river, Drake wasn't taking any chances. Indeed, the Seven Years' (French and Indian) War was already raging in North America.

Sirájuddawleh retorted: "On what pretense do the English disregard my demands, when I have ordered the French not to attack them in the event of a European war? On the same pretense that enabled them to divide and conquer the Deccan! I swear by Almighty Allah and His Prophet that unless the English consent to level their fortifications and trade upon the same terms they did before Ferrukhsiyer's charter, I shall drive them out of my kingdom." [18] He then issued a

[17] Holwell, J. Z.: *Historical Events.*
[18] Husayn Khán.

proclamation listing "three substantial motives for driving the English out of my kingdom": (1) the unwarranted erection of strong fortifications; (2) the abuse of free-trade passports; and (3) the flagrant protection of native criminals and traitors. He concluded: "If they [i.e., the English] will promise to reform their conduct in accordance with my desires, I will pardon their faults and permit their residence here." [19]

Rájá Ráiballabh had long been the lover of Nevàb Sirájuddawleh's Muslim aunt, Ghasítá Bégam, who bore two of his bastards: Kishandás Kumár, who was raised as a Brahman, and Muráduddawleh, who was circumcised and reared as a Muslim. After the Rajah was murdered—or "executed for treason"—and the prince (Kishandás) had fled to Calcutta, Sirájuddawleh paid his "widowed" aunt an unexpected visit and found in her possession several letters from Governor Drake and members of Council (some of whom she had apparently favored in bed) proposing the overthrow of "your brainsick nephew" in favor of cousin Shawkat Jang. Shawkat, though an infamous pervert and drug addict, was the lesser of two evils so far as the English were concerned; for he had allegedly demonstrated his friendship by fellating Mr. Drake.[20] Having fled to Delhi after the assassination of his father, he now returned with a *firmán* from the Grand Mughal appointing him Governor of Bengal by right of succession. Apparently, Shawkat had been as oily-mouthed with Emperor 'Álemgír as with Mr. Drake!

Sirájuddawleh meted out due punishment. Aunt Ghasítá was put to death with red-hot spears forced up her anus and vagina; her new lover and co-conspirator, Násir 'Alí, was castrated and sold as a eunuch; so was her bantling, Muráduddawleh; and cousin Shawkat, captured while raising an army against the "Beast of Bengal," was mutilated out of recognition. His eyes were gouged out and his ears, nose, tongue, hands, and genitals amputated.[21] Reports that he was later killed (October 16, 1756) in battle against his cousin, who decisively defeated his small forces outside Purneah, prove that he lived to seek revenge.

[19] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

[20] *Ibid.* (*Shawkat Jang zerdak-i-Drayk Sáhib khvurd:* Shawkat Jang devoured Mr. Drake's carrot; i.e., uncircumcised penis.)

[21] *Ibid.;* Husayn Khán; Kerem 'Alí.

Sirájuddawleh Khán now had documentary evidence that the "uncircumcised dogs" were plotting against him. This warranted *war:* war to the death, in Allah's name, with usurping Infidels.

Meantime, in Calcutta, the English smelled a rat and trapped it. Ámíchand Mahájan, trader and banker, was one of the wealthiest Hindus in the City of Palaces. He had long served as *gumáshteh* or special agent and broker to Company merchants, and he lived opulently in the European quarter. No sooner had this oily Brahman sheltered Kishandás, for a fee of fifty thousand rupees, than Sirájuddawleh sent him a warning note to clear out of the settlement if he valued his life. Ámíchand never saw the note, for it was intercepted by his English patrons. Suspicions were well founded. The *Mahájan* (Great Banker) was in cahoots with the Neváb.

On June 15, a native runner dashed into Fort William with the staggering news that Sirájuddawleh was leading an army of fifty thousand against the town. Alarm turned to panic, and panic to chaos. It was every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost. The Governor, the fort commandant, members of Council, soldiers and civilians—hundreds of terror-driven Europeans made a mad scramble for the banks of the Hooghly, where they piled into boats and shoved off downstream to safety. Many women and children were drowned in the stampede. None of the boats returned and nearly two hundred men, women, and children were left to die.

Looting and burning the Company factory at Cossimbazar, a hundred miles north of Calcutta, Sirájuddawleh seized its employees and its overseer, Mr. William Watts, and had them forcibly deprepucized.[22] He cut off the ears and noses of several gentlemen who offered resistance, taking their wives and children as slaves. None of the women and children was molested, but boys were later made eunuchs and girls sold as concubines. The militia commandant, Lieutenant Elliot, was whipped naked for his defiance; but before he could be mutilated, he seized a guard's musket and shot himself to death.[23] That was on June 4. Twelve days later Sirájuddawleh was encamped outside the walls of Calcutta, exhorting that abandoned handful huddled inside the fort to surrender or be slaughtered. The British

[22] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí* (*Vát Sáhib-o-Hastín Sáhib-o-ghayrán makhtún zúrekí shud:* Mr. Watts, Mr. Hastings, and others were forcibly circumcised).

[23] *Ibid.*; Kerem 'Alí.

were his special *bêtes noires*. He ignored the French, Dutch, and Danish factories.

According to court historian Ghulám Husayn, who accompanied the expedition, "Bengalis hugged themselves in great expectation that the English would defeat Sirájuddawleh and deliver them from his tyranny and oppression." To say that the new Nevàb was popular with his people is to flatter an unmerciful dictator. Hindus hated and Muslims feared him for his fanatic cruelty. They wanted no war with the Europeans. Such a war had laid waste the Deccan, turning brother against brother. They knew that they could not win such a war, for 'Alíverdí had warned them: "Destroy the trade of the Europeans and you destroy Bengal. Disturb the hive, and the bees will sting to death. Set fire to the land, and the sea shall put it out." [24] Who could love a murderer and mutilator of his own people, one who castrated holy men for predicting his downfall and strangled gentlewomen for refusing his favors? Even his supporters distrusted him, and were purely mercenary. "His army marched unwillingly," Jean Law tells us. "His troops murmured loudly against him: said that he was taking them to be butchered, and that they could never capture Calcutta." But the prospects of unlimited loot, dangled before their eyes at Cossimbazar, enticed them on. An ancient lesson in the secret of dictatorial success had been followed by Sirájuddawleh in the pampering of his army.

The ignominious flight of Governor Drake, Commandant Minchin, and all but three of the Council members had left the Fort William defenders without a leader, and surgeon and magistrate John Zephaniah Holwell was elected to command the forlorn band of English, Portuguese, Armenians, and half-castes. "Of these Handfull of Troops in Garrison," he later wrote, "there were not 5 who had ever, I believe, seen a Musquet fired in Anger." [25]

Dr. Holwell's first act was to order the arrest of Ámíchand, his brother-in-law Házrímall, and guest Kishandás. Breaking into the Mahajan's house, a squad of native militiamen collared Ámíchand and Kishandás and hustled them off as hostages to the fort. Házrímall bolted into the harem, hoping to hide behind the inviolate veils of *purdah*, but the invaders tore in after him, hacking off his left hand

[24] Yúsuf 'Alí, *et al.*
[25] *Historical Events.*

when he fired a pistol. Amíchand's loyal eunuch, Jagannáth Singh, saved the thirteen concubines from the fate worse than death by slitting their throats and setting the seraglio afire. Then, stabbing himself, he cheated his assailants' bayonets.

For three days the garrison held out against a murderous cannonade; but in the afternoon of June 20, with almost half killed or wounded and the rest dazed or drunk, Doc Holwell decided that further resistance was hopeless. A flag of truce was hoisted, the gates flung open, weapons thrown to the ground.

Honoring nothing but himself, Sirájuddawleh allowed his cutthroats to swarm into the fort and drag out its helpless occupants. Women and girls were brutally stripped and manhandled, men and boys kicked and spat upon. Befouled with Muslim urine, Holwell and Kishandás were bound and hauled before the Neváb. Infuriated at finding a treasure of only 500,000 rupees, Sirájuddawleh ordered his baseborn cousin circumcised and chased out of the city stark-naked. Ámíchand, squealing like a pig, also suffered the slicing-off of his long foreskin; and after he was thrown into jail, cowflesh was forced down his throat, an abomination to inflict upon a Brahman to whom the cow was sacred.[26] The shock apparently affected Ámíchand's mind and morals, for his life was one of continuous degeneration thereafter.

Having lectured Dr. Holwell on the folly of defiance, threatening him with circumcision and even death, Sirájuddawleh promised him protection if he would be realistic enough to reveal where the rest of the treasure had been hidden. When Holwell shrugged and said nothing, the Neváb ordered him away with a disdainful flick of the hand. *"Isháreh bi-'áqil káfíyeh,"* he hissed. *A word to the wise is sufficient.*[27]

Before the day was done, Sirájuddawleh discovered the monetary wealth of Calcutta (five million rupees) cached in a vault beneath the fort. The material wealth, including Company property, was worth far more. Much of it was stolen or destroyed by the Neváb's pillaging troops. It has been estimated that the total loss suffered by the merchants of Calcutta (now renamed *'Alínagar*, the City of Mehmúd 'Alí, in honor of its conqueror) amounted to some twenty million rupees or £1,000,000, £2500 of which belonged to Robert Clive.

[26] Kerem 'Alí; *Tárikh-i-Mansúrí.*
[27] Husayn Khán.

Dr. Holwell was again brought before Nevâb Sirájuddawleh, who expressed his resentment at the presumption of the English in daring to defend Fort William. He also showed dissatisfaction at "the smallness" of the sum found in the Company treasury, then added with a twisted smile: "You English must be fools, obliging me to drive you out of so fine a city." [28]

The taking of Calcutta temporarily allayed the Nevâb's paranoiac fears, causing him to brag: "I do not need guns to drive away the European dogs. This slipper of mine is sufficient for that!" [29] Someone had told him the kingdom of England boasted only ten thousand inhabitants and he believed it. "Sirájuddawleh had the most extravagant contempt for Europeans," Jean Law recorded. " 'A pair of slippers,' said he, 'is all that is needed to govern them.' It is for this reason, no doubt, that he did not bother to pursue the hundreds of Calcutta fugitives." Indeed, Sirájuddawleh thought he had won a great victory; but, in the words of historian Kerem 'Alí, "All that Sirájuddawleh won was a bad name"—a name blackened by the "Black Hole of Calcutta."

One hundred and forty-six European captives were packed into the Hole, a cell, eighteen by fifteen feet, in the dungeon of Fort William. The night was stiflingly hot and through the two small windows, iron-barred, came the gagging reek of burning warehouses. Jammed to suffocation, the captives were virtually buried alive. They could barely move, barely breathe. Soon the moans of the suffering, the shrieks of the demented, and the death rattle were the only sounds to be heard. Instead of water the guffawing guards heaved bucketfuls of urine through the bars. "Hear the infidel dogs howl!" they said and jabbed torches through the bars on the hands and faces of those within reach.[30]

J. Z. Holwell, one of the sufferers, gives us this graphic account:

> *My Legs were almost broke with the Weight against them. . . . I was very nearly press'd to Death, . . . deprived of all Motion. . . . Kept my Mouth moist by sucking the Perspiration off my Shirt-sleeves, and catching the Drops as they fell like heavy Rain from my*

[28] *Ibid.*
[29] Kerem 'Alí; Jean Law.
[30] Kerem 'Alí; *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

> *Head and Face. You can hardly imagine how unhappy I was if any of them escaped my Mouth. . . . My Breathing grew short and painfull, . . . my Thirst grew unsupportable. . . . I was seized with a Pain in my Breast and Palpitation of my Heart. . . . I had, in an ungovernable Fit of Thirst, attempted drinking my Urine; but it was so intensely bitter there was no enduring a second Taste, whereas no Bristol-water could be more soft or pleasant than what arose from Perspiration. . . . The Stench arising from the dead Bodies was grown intollerable. It was as if we were forcibly held with our Heads over a Bowl full of strong volatile Spirit of Hartshorn untill suffocated.*[31]

At sunrise, the guards unbolted the door and were staggered by a fuming stench and clouds of flies. Of the 146 who had been incarcerated only twenty-three crawled out alive.

Half-dead, his body covered with boils, John Holwell was again dragged before Sirájuddawleh Khán Behádur, who demanded once and for all to know, from his own lips, where the rest of the Company treasure lay. "I know you English do not put all your eggs in one basket," he smirked. Holwell babbled incoherently and burst into tears; so the Nevàb, still in a savage mood, ordered him and twenty others thrown back into the Black Hole. An English woman and girl, the only female survivors, were carried off to the royal harem. One hundred and twenty-three corpses were flung into a limepit. A few days later, clapped in irons, the twenty-one male survivors were herded 120 miles northward to Murshidabad, Muslim capital of Bengal, where they were paraded nude through streets lined by jeering spectators. After several weeks of sodomitic abuse by the Nevàb's soldiery, young Holwell and his fellow sufferers were circumcised and set free.[32]

En route to Murshidabad, Sirájuddawleh had extorted 25,000 rupees from the Danes at Serampore, 350,000 from the Dutch at Chinsurah, and 450,000 from the French at Chandernagore. "Who is so clever as I?" he laughed. "I have charged these other infidel dogs for the expense of my victory over their rival!" Entering his palace on July 11, the Nevàb dispatched a manifesto to Delhi, informing the

[31] *The Black Hole.*

[32] Kerem 'Alí; Husayn Khán; *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí* (*Hável Sáhib . . . manyúk-o-makhtún zúreki shud:* Mr. Holwell . . . was forcibly buggered and circumcised).

Mughal emperor of his signal success and that "not since Tímúr-i-Lang [Tamerlane] has there been such a conquering hero in Hindustan." [33]

By a certain standard of judgment, Sirájuddawleh's seizure of Calcutta was justifiable. According to one contemporary critic, "The principal Cause of the War was the Knowledge of what had happened on the Coast of Coromandell; for many Moors (and some of Distinction among them) have come lately from thence and declared that the English and French had divided the Country, while their respective Nabobs are not better than Shadows of what they should be." [34]

But what can be said for Sirájuddawleh's "inhuman barbarities"? He has had his share of apologists and whitewashers, who have absolved him of direct responsibility for the Black Hole tragedy of which he allegedly knew nothing. Some have questioned the authenticity of its occurrence, asserting that Holwell and others exaggerated its horrors for ulterior motives, and have scoffed at Macaulay's lurid description as an example of imperialist atrocity propaganda. Hence the "Black Hole of Calcutta" has been branded a "gigantic hoax," a "fabrication" of Holwell, its official narrator.[35] Karl Marx (*Notes on India*) dismissed it as a "sham scandal" perpetrated by "the English hypocrites and intruders." James Mill took another, more realistic and thought-provoking, view: "The atrocities of English imprisonment at home, not then exposed to detestation by the labour of [philanthropist John] Howard, too naturally reconciled Englishmen abroad to the use of dungeons—of *black holes*. . . . Had *no* black hole existed (as none ought to exist anywhere, least of all in the sultry and unwholesome climate of Bengal), those who perished in the Black Hole of Calcutta would have experienced a different fate."

However, even Orme states that "The Nabob disavow'd any Knowledge of the Horrors of the preceding Night, and seem'd (as much as a Man naturally cruel could be) affected with what had pass'd." [36]

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Transactions in India.*

[35] Gopal, Ram: *How the British Occupied Bengal;* Gupta, Brijen K.: *Sirajuddaullah and the East India Company;* Mukherjee, Ramkrishna: *Rise and Fall of the East India Company; et al.*

[36] *Military Transactions.*

And Holwell, in his account of "that most despicable Act of Cruelty," does not harp on Sirájuddawleh's part in it, perhaps because the Nevàb spared his life without castrating and selling him into slavery. Sirájuddawleh apparently admired his fortitude. Holwell penned in a private letter, "His Orders, I learn, were only general: that we should be imprison'd." [37] Even Clive was deluded into writing to his wife, before he knew better:

> *It would be unfolding a Tale too horrible to repeat if I was to relate to You the horrid Cruelties & Barbarities inflicted upon an unfortunate People to whom the Nabob, in a great part, owes the Riches & Grandeur of his Province: no less than 120 People (the greatest part of them Gentlemen of Family & Distinction) being put to an ignominious Death in one Night & in such a Manner as was quite inconsistent with the Character of a Man of Courage or Humanity, such as I have always heard the Nabob* [a common confusion of bestial Sirájuddawleh with manly 'Alíverdí] *represented to be, and for this Reason I believe it must have been done without his Knowledge.*[38]

In search of a scapegoat, Holwell fell upon Ámíchand, the Hindu tycoon of Calcutta, whom he had ordered arrested for collaboration with the Nevàb. "The hard Treatment [mutilation and abuse] I met with may truely be attributed in a great measure to his Suggestions & Insinuations. . . . You know, Omychund can never forgive. . . . It is well known He was the chief Instigator of the Massacre of the Black Hole." [39]

Reports of Sirájuddawleh's kind treatment of European prisoners are contradicted by accounts of brutality. Few Englishmen dared mention forcible circumcision, castration, sodomization—for obvious reasons. Native authorities, however, assure us that many European women and children were auctioned off into the harems of the Nevàb and his retainers.[40] One lad, a drummer boy who had survived the Black Hole only to suffer emasculation and enslavement, signed the following affidavit on his release in June of 1757:

[37] *Orme Papers.*
[38] *Maskelyne Papers.*
[39] *Orme Papers.*
[40] Husayn Khán; Kerem 'Alí; *Táríkh-i-Mansúri.*

I, Alexander Campbell, *was taken at Eleven (11) Years Old by ye same Person who afterwards made me an Eunuque. I was taken Prisoner out of ye Dungeon at Calcutta, where so many unhappy People suffer'd, by Jaffer Beg [Ja'fer Bég], Commandant to Serajah-Dowlah [Sirájuddawleh], who had me gelded. My only Employment was to attend his Ladies of ye Harem, and to be used by him for ye most filthy Practices. Mr. Drake behaved with ye greatest Imprudence, and deserved to be shot. Mr. Holwell, who did not desert us, is worthy of being Governour.*[41]

("Upon Examination [by Dr. Edward Ives, civil surgeon], it was indeed discover'd ye Lad was without Scrotum & Testicules, which had been compleatly cut off, leaving an ugly Scar. Ye Penis was unmutilated [uncircumcised]; ye Fundamental Orifice [anus], tho' apparently subjected to frequent Abuse, not much dilated; ye Lad in fair Health & Spirits, considering his Misfortune." Ives added: "*Symptomata:* repeated Erections, irritated Foreskin & Corona Glandis. *Diagnosis:* excessive Self-Abuse, doubtless arouzed by ye Manual Pollution of his Sodomizer. *Remedium:* Circumcision.") [42]

"Allah knows, it was not my intention to remove the mercantile business of your Company from the province to Bengal," Nevâb Sirájuddawleh notified the Governor of Fort St. George; "but Mr. Drake (your agent) was a very wicked and unruly man, and began to give protection to persons who had robbed and wronged the state. Notwithstanding all my admonitions, he compounded his shameless actions with contempt. However, that mean and disgraceful man has reaped the just reward of his deeds. As Allah willed it, he (and all like him) has been expelled from his place of power." [43]

William Watts, released from captivity, also wrote to Madras: "Should ye Nabob think fit to permit ye English to return & re-settle, we are afraid it would be not onely with ye Loss of All their Priviledges, but on such shamefull Terms that Englishmen we hope will never consent to." [44]

But Sirájuddawleh had realized his ambition. He had, for the time being at least, cast John Company out of his domain. Merely extort-

[41] Ives, Dr. Edward: *Journal* (insert).
[42] *Ibid.*
[43] *Fort St. George MS. Records* (in Persian).
[44] *Ibid.*

ing protection money from the small French, Dutch, and Danish settlements, he had confiscated or destroyed all English property between Calcutta and Murshidabad: molesting, mutilating, and murdering as well. But he would now have to reckon with his Nemesis.

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THE AVENGER

The startling news of the Calcutta tragedy reached Madras on August 16, 1756. George Pigot, who had succeeded the retired Nicholas Morse as governor, at once sent for his old friend. "If any body can avenge this Outrage," he wrote, "it is You." [1] Clive answered the call instantly, eagerly. Action again, action at last!

No sooner packed than the Clives took ship from Fort St. David to Madras. There it appeared that Admiral Charles Watson was as contrary as ever. The question of precedence arose once more. Watson was giving up a "much-needed" furlough by shipping the punitive expedition, so he stickled for an equal share of authority. Clive was willing to let him have his way, if only to avoid quibbling delay, but the Governor and Council nonetheless advised the Admiral that *their* man was in command when it came to final decisions. Finally Watson grumbled assent, by his wife's chiding.

On September 30, it was unanimously agreed at a consultation "that the Board will grant a Commission appointing Rob't Clive, Esqr., Commander-in-Chief of all the Troops sent and to be sent on the Expedition to Bengall." [2] "Had We not the highest Opinion of Colonel Clive's Prudence and Moderation," the Company Directors later wrote, "there would be no End to the disagreeable Reflexions We might make of so extra-ordinary a Precedent." [3] Full power in the hands of one man, though a trustworthy servant, was disquieting

[1] *Pigot Letters* (Aug. 17, 1756).
[2] *Fort St. George MS. Records.*
[3] *Ibid.*

to the democratic Company. But desperate times called for desperate measures, and Pigot and Council gave Clive *carte blanche* "to persue such Measures as You shall judge most conducive to the Company's Benefit in Bengall," so long as all property and privileges were restored and ample reparation made for irreparable losses as well as insurance against "future Insults and Exactions." They added, equivocally: "We think that Sentiments of revenging Injuries (although they were never more just) should give place to the Necessity of sparing, as far as possible, the many bad Consequences of War; but We are none the less of Opinion that the Sword should go Hand-in-Hand with the Pen." A hint that "The End will justify the Means" is to be found in their suggestion that "We need not represent to You the great Advantage which We think it will be to the Military Operations to effect a Junction with any Powers in the Provinces of Bengall that may be dissatisfy'd with the Violences of the Nabob's Government, or that may have Pretensions to the Nabobship. We have desired Mr. Watson, if he thinks it practicable, to dispossess the French of Chandernagore": a clever request. Watson represented the Crown, which would bear the responsibility of aggression. Clive, representing the Company, was not to attack the French unless war was declared in Europe.[4]

On October 11, when he received his commission as C-in-C, Colonel Clive wrote to the "Hon'ble Gentlemen" in London: "I am now upon the point of embarking on board His Majesty's Squadron with a fine Body of Europeans full of Spirit & Resentment for the Insults & Barbarities inflicted on so many British Subjects. I flatter myself that this Expedition will not end with the Re-taking of Calcutta only; . . . I hope we shall be able to dispossess the French of Chandernagore." [5] He expressed these sentiments to Governor Pigot: "Having lost £2500 in the Sacking of Calcutta, there's a practical as well as moral Purpose in my undertaking this Expedition. At all Hazards, by God, we shall re-capture Calcutta & call that perverse, spoilt & blood-thirsty Boy to account." [6] He then wrote to his father: "This Expedition, if attended with Success, may enable me to do great things. It is by far the grandest of my Undertakings; I go with great

[4] *Orme Papers.*
[5] *E.I.C. Records.*
[6] *Pigot Letters* (Oct. 16, 1756).

Forces & great Authority. Be the Event what it will, there is no Hardship or Risque (consistent with common Prudence) I will not undergo to obtain the wish'd-for Success." [7]

On October 16, 1756, the punitive expedition sailed for Bengal. Aboard Watson's five war and three transport vessels were Clive's 250 redcoats of His Majesty's 39th Regiment of Foot, the first outfit of King's Regulars to be loaned to the East India Company; 570 bayonets of the Madras European Fusiliers, the E.I.C.'s first all-white regulars; eighty half-caste artillerymen; and twelve hundred sepoys.

Clive left Fort St. George with the knowledge that England and France were again at war in Europe, ending the nominal truce in India. His instructions, therefore, were to seize the French settlement at Chandernagore either before or after he had disposed of the boy despot. Without a base of operations, the French could not do in Bengal what they had done in the Deccan: manipulate native tyrants and pretenders.

Governor Pigot addressed a warning to Nevâb Sirájuddawleh, in answer to his assertion that "It was not my intention to remove the mercantile business of your Company out of the province of Bengal":

> *I have received information that all the Company's property, and all the property of private individuals, has been seized by you and your people; and I am further informed that a great number of our merchants were killed by your people in a cruel and barbarous manner. I was willing to believe that the violence and cruelties perpetrated by your army against the English were without your knowledge, but I find you commanded your army in person and gloried in the slaughter of our people. Well, the great commander* [Admiral Watson] *of the King of England's ships has not slept in peace since he heard this news; and he is coming with his mighty fleet. I have also sent a great chief named Colonel Clive, who will govern in my behalf, with many land forces. Full satisfaction and restitution must be made for the losses we have suffered. You are wise. Consider whether it is better to engage in a war that will never end but in your own destruction, or to do what is just and right in the sight of Allah. A great name is acquired by justice as well as by valor.*[8]

[7] *Clive Papers.*
[8] *Tárikh-i-Mansúrí.*

The southwest monsoon was blowing when the fleet put to sea, and the expedition had rough sailing for nearly two tempestuous months. In early December, they sighted that familiar muddy surge from the wide mouth of the Hooghly staining the bright blue waters of Bengal Bay.

"Bless my soul!" Watson gaped, pointing at dead bodies bobbing in the yellow tide. Clive explained that the Hooghly joins the Ganges, and is thus considered a sacred river by the Hindus. "Brahmins burn their corpses and scatter the ashes downstream, but Soodras simply chuck their dead into the river and allow 'em to float away to kingdom come." [9]

The mud, thatch, and bamboo huts of fishing villages dotted boggy banks crowded with dinghies and teeming with naked Hindus. The sight delighted the sea-weary Britons. Clive and Watson found several hundred European refugees at Fulta, a hamlet (Clive called it "a despicable Hole on the River-side") about thirty miles southwest of Calcutta. There they were living like low-caste natives, steeped in misery, but thankful to be safe if not sound. "For almost 5 Months they had been surrounded by Sickness & Disease," Dr. Edward Ives (who accompanied the expedition) jotted in his journal, "which made strange Havock among them."

On December 15, the day they arrived at Fulta, Clive and Watson sent an ultimatum to Sirájuddawleh:

> *We hope you will have so great a regard for yourself, for justice, and for the prosperity of your country as to give the Company full satisfaction for all the losses and injuries they have lately suffered. All things may be made up in a friendly and peaceful manner by restoring to the Company their rights and privileges, as dictated by Ferrukhsiyer's charter, and to the poor inhabitants of Calcutta what they have been plundered of. Otherwise, we shall advance upon your capital with a force which we think sufficient to vindicate our claim.*[10]

Unfortunately for him, the Nevàb was not "sensible of the Benefit of having the English settled in his Country." [11] He ordered Rájá Mánakchand, his commandant at Calcutta, to advance southward at

[9] *Ives Journal*
[10] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
[11] Orme.

once to drive back the intruders. "Drive them away with your slippers!" [12]

Reason having failed, force was in order. "Belike that's all the rascal understands," Clive remarked to Watson.[13] Clive's troops and Watson's warships pulled out of Fulta on December 27, and two days later they encountered their first obstacle upriver to Calcutta. The plan of action was for Watson to bombard the fort of Budge-Budge, which obstructed passage to the City of Palaces, while Clive, executing a flank movement, marched north of the fort to cut off the garrison's retreat.

Colonel Clive, suffering from "a violent Cold & slight Feaver," rode in a palanquin most of the way. He forced-marched his soldiery, who dragged guns and wagons for want of draft bullocks, through swamp and jungle and mangrove creek. Fever-enfeebled, at times delirious, Clive was barely aware of those sixteen hours of sloshing and slogging over mosquito-ridden bottomland. A halt was finally called early in the morning of the twenty-ninth, when the dead-tired infantrymen slumped down in the dry bed of a lake to get some sleep. Here, about a mile and a half north of Budge-Budge, they would lie in ambush for the retreating garrison.

Surrounding the hollow on three sides, Rájá Mánakchand sprang a surprise with over three thousand warriors. Clive's sentinels and scouts were too overcome by sleep to detect them. But with Clive at their head the troops kept their discipline and a panic was averted. "Steady, men! Form up and stand fire!" [14]

"Clive's Avengers" charged with a cheer, driving their attackers back into the jungle at bayonet point. Clive then directed his gunners to sweep the thicket. Mánakchand was about to rush his horsemen into the hollow when a cannonball whizzed by his head. The sensation was so unpleasant that he changed his mind, shrilling: "*Píché hat jáo! hat jáo, jaldí-jaldí!*" (Fall back! fall back, quick-quick!) [15] and the three thousand beaten and demoralized Bengalis took to their heels.

While Colonel Clive and his column were thus engaged, Admiral

[12] Jean Law.
[13] Ives.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Tárikh-i-Mansúrí.*

Watson had anchored his squadron off the strong mud fort of Budge-Budge. Bombarding the ramparts between daybreak and afternoon, he had gouged a breach by the time Clive approached for a land assault; but, considering the exhausted condition of his troops, Clive decided to delay the storming of Budge-Budge till next morning.

But two hundred and fifty sailors, many of them rollickingly drunk, were landed to take part in the assault. One Mr. Strahan, fired with pot-valor, strolled up to the fort and stumbled through the breach. "The fort is mine!" he hooted, blasting his horse pistol at a squad of enemy sentries. "*Hip-hip-hooray!*" Seeing that Strahan was alone, the Hindustanis dashed at him with shouts of "*Frangí ba'inchód!*" (European sisterfucker!)

Whipping out his cutlass, Strahan swung the blade until it snapped off at the hilt. Just in time a cluster of redcoats and sepoys, led by Captain Eyre Coote of the 39th Foot, came to his rescue. Within minutes, hundreds more were streaming through the breach; and the fort defenders, shocked by this sudden attack in the dead of night, ran for their lives to Calcutta. Thus was Budge-Budge taken, quite by accident! "Without the least Honour to any one," Coote scribbled in his journal.

Come morning, "Paddy" was hauled before Admiral Watson and, in order to avoid a flogging, promised never again to take a fort by himself.

The pot-valiant wasn't flogged but "dried out" in the brig.[16]

Clive reported to Pigot: "Our Loss in the Skirmish near Budge-Budge was greater than could well be spared. . . . Indeed, we still labour under every Disadvantage in the World." [17] But Mánakchand was so demoralized by Clive's defiance that he abandoned Calcutta with a garrison of only five hundred men and fled with his army to join the Nevàb at Murshidabad. When Watson and his warships anchored off Fort William on January 2, 1757, all five hundred of the enemy cleared out of town at the first shot. The Union Jack again fluttered over the City of Palaces.

Clive marched into Calcutta to find that Watson had appointed Captain Coote provisional governor of the fort. "What's the meaning of this, Mr. Coote? I demand entrance for my troops."

[16] *Ives Journal; Voyage from England to India.*
[17] *Pigot Papers.*

"By your leave, sir: Mr. Watson ordered me to occupy Fort William in His Majesty's name and with His Majesty's troops, and he has instructed me that none of the Company's officers or men should gain entrance without his orders."

"How dare he! And *you*, sir: how dare you flout my authority! Mr. Watson is not the commander-in-chief. He has no right to appoint a subordinate officer to such a command, and you damned well know it. Show me your commission, sirrah." [18]

Coote handed him the letter of instructions, and Clive read: "You are hereby required and directed to garrison the Fort of Calcutta with His Majesty's Troops; and you are not to quit your Post, or deliver up your Command, till further Orders from me." [19]

"I see nothing in this that instructs you to bar the gates against the Company's troops, or to assume the authority of governor of this fort. Explain yourself, sir!"

"They were verbal instructions, Colonel, for confirmation of which you must see Mr. Watson."

"Verbal indeed! Mr. Watson dared not commit such highhandedness to paper. He has no authority to appoint an inferior officer in the King's service as governor of the Company's fort, much less bar entrance to the Company's troops. I order you not to block our entrance. Disobey, and I shall storm the place if need be and place you under arrest."

"I shall not disobey. But before I admit your troops, sir, I beg leave to inform the Admiral of your intentions."

"Leave granted, Captain. I should not wish you at odds with Mr. Watson."

Coote notified Watson, who sent Captain Henry Speke ashore to parley. Speke, skipper of the *Kent* (Watson's flagship), asked Clive by what authority *he* had assumed command of the fort. Clive said: "By the authority of His Majesty's commission, as being lieutenant colonel and commander-in-chief of the land forces."

Speke nodded. "If you please, what should I tell Mr. Watson?"

"Tell him he is acting the perverse fool, and that I am occupying the fort in accordance with rightful authority." [20]

[18] Ives; *Journal of the Expedition to Bengall.*
[19] *Orme/Pigot Papers.*
[20] Ives; *Journal of the Expedition to Bengall.*

Speke returned to the flagship with Clive's message, which rankled Watson into writing:

> *I am extreamly surprized to find you have not withdrawn the Company's Troops, which puts me under a Necessity of acquainting you: If you still persist in continuing in the Fort, you will force me to take such Methods as will be as disagreeable to me as they possibly can be to You. I hope yet, after you have prudently consider'd this Affair, you'll not drive me to the Extremities I should be sorry to be urged to; for the Plea you make of being Commanding Officer of the Land Forces gives you not the least Authority to enter a place (forcibly) conquer'd by me, and garrison'd by Troops under my immediate Command.*[21]

Captain Speke returned to Fort William with this message to find that Colonel Clive had quartered all the Company's troops therein. Clive read the missive, shrugged, and said: "Do what you will. I shall not abandon the fort."

Speke, who was not by nature a violent man, suddenly blurted: "Sir, if you do not abandon the fort, you shall be fired out!"

Clive snorted. "I cannot answer for the consequences; but by God, I will not abandon the fort."

Speke attempted a diversion: "Captain Coote informs me you forced the gates."

"What of it?"

"Well, sir, may I take the liberty to ask if it was a soldierlike action?"

"Captain Coote drove out my advance guard of sepoys. Would you call that a soldierlike action becoming a King's officer and a gentleman? Captain Coote is a liar. What need had I to force the gates, when they were open to me?"

"Pardon me, sir, but I shall be glad to think this is the language of passion."

"How so?"

"That being in heat, you do not much consider what you say."

"Damn you, sirrah! Go tell Mr. Watson, as I am a King's officer as well as he, I shall evacuate the fort only if he promises that I should

21 *Orme Papers.*

assume full command here. 'Tis a childish offer, and damnably ridiculous, but methinks I am dealing with ridiculous children." [22]

Speke returned to his warship, where he soon penned:

> *The Admirall . . . hath commanded me to tell You that . . . as by forcing the Guards placed in the Fort by his Orders you have offer'd him a personal Affront, and thro' him to His Majesty's Authority, the Duty he owes to himself as an Officer trusted with the Care of H. Maj'ty's Honour in supporting that of His Forces will not admitt of his promising any thing till You have first, by withdrawing the Troops under your Command, acknowledged the Insult you have so unadvizedly offer'd. That done, if You will give yourself the Trouble to step Aboard, I dare promise you: You will receive clear Proofs how very unwilling Mr. Watson is to disagree with a Man for whom he hath allways had an Esteem.*[23]

Clive did not give himself the trouble to "step aboard." He refused to give an inch. He knew all too well how Regular officers contemptuously referred to him as "The Hero," "The Clipcock," and "Fortune's Darling." The rivalry between the King's and the Company's brass was petty, puerile, perilous. Because Watson took Fort William, by default of the enemy, Watson claimed full jurisdiction to the exclusion of Clive. Such confusion of authority could prove dangerous to the whole expedition, and Clive determined to put an end to it. The only way was to call Watson's bluff. Thus, when the Colonel declined to come aboard, the Admiral was obliged to come ashore. The showdown in Fort William opened with a skirmish over Coote's commission:

"God damn you, sirrah! By what authority dare you make such an appointment?"

Clive rejected Watson's claim to authority as commander of His Majesty's East India Marine, and laughed off his threat to bombard the fort.[24]

The test of nerves between soldier and sailor was over. Clive had called Watson's bluff by occupying the fort with his troops and by superseding Coote as governor. It ended with Watson begging Clive

[22] Ives; *Journal of the Expedition to Bengall.*
[23] *Orme Papers.*
[24] Ives; *Journal of the Expedition to Bengall.*

to meet him halfway. Clive was agreeable, mindful of the grim fact that they had much more to do in Bengal than fight among themselves. Watson was empowered Governor of Calcutta in the King's name and Clive commissioned himself Commandant of Fort William in the name of John Company.

Clive wrote to Pigot:

> *Between Friends, I can not help regretting that I ever undertook this Expedition. The Mortifications I have received from Mr. Watson & the Gentlemen of the Squadron, in point of Prerogative, are such that nothing but the Good of the Service could induce me to submit to them. . . . Capt. Coote presented me with a Commission from Adm'l Watson, appointing him Governour of Ft. Wm., which I knew not a Syllable of before; and it seems this dirty under-hand Contrivance was carried on . . . under a Pretence that I intended the same thing: which, I declare, never enter'd my Thoughts.*[25]

Clive found the City of Palaces reduced to a pile of rubble. "It is not possible to describe the Distresses of the Inhabitants of this once opulent & great Town," he penned to his wife. "It must be many Years before it is restored to its former Grandeur. It is computed the private Losses amount to upwards of Two Millions Sterling." [26]

No sooner had Watson assumed his share of authority than he underhandedly handed the reins of government over to their previous controller, the "weak-kneed" Roger Drake. This calculated act enraged Clive all the more, even though it meant the Crown had graciously bowed out of Company political affairs, for he considered Drake untrustworthy and a tool of Watson. The Calcutta Council was certainly packed against him now, thanks to the Admiral's maneuvering. He dashed off another note to Governor Pigot:

> *The Gentlemen here seem much dissatisfy'd at the Authority I am vested with; indeed, it does not suit the Fine Gentlemen at all that I should have any thing to say. . . . The Loss of private Property, and the Means of recovering it, seem to be the only Objects which take up the Attention of the Bengall Gentlemen. I would have you guard against every thing these Wretches can say; for believe me,*

[25] *Pigot Papers.*
[26] *Clive Papers.*

> *they are bad Subjects & rotten at Heart, and will stick at nothing to prejudice You & the Gentlemen of the [Madras] Committee. Indeed, how should they do otherwise, when they have not spared one another? I shall only add, their Conduct at Calcutta finds no Excuse—even among themselves—and that all the Riches of Peru & Mexico could not induce me to dwell among them.*[27]

Drake and Council had advised Clive to "recede from the Independent Powers given You by the Committee of Fort St. George as Commander-in-Chief of their Land Forces, and subject Yourself to the Orders of this Presidency"—meaning, of course, Watson & Co.[28] But Clive maintained that "I was sent to Bengall with a Power independent of the Governour & Councill of Calcutta; the Governour & Councill of Madras look upon the Gov't of Calcutta as annihilated." He then added: "You may be assured that, as I shall never make Use of the Power vested in me to the Injury of the Hon'ble Company's Affairs, I shall be as far from suffering You to take away any part of it." [29]

This bone of contention was never buried. However, in late January, Clive informed Pigot of Watson's charitable change of heart:

> *At last, the King's Troops are put under my Command during the Admiral's Pleasure—or rather during mine, if I insist upon my Right. It had been better for the Service they had never come, and that I had the like Number of Company's Troops in their stead. Mr. W.'s Magnanimity was doubtless occasion'd by the alarming Intelligence we received: that the Nabob, incensed at the Loss of all his late Conquests & alarm'd at the Rapidity of ours, had raised a formidable Army & was marching at the Head of it from his Capital (Moorshedabad) towards Calcutta, fully determined to drive the English out of all his Territories & take ample Vengeance for the Disgraces we have brought upon him.*[30]

The effect of Clive's remittent fever and overexertion was a nervous disorder which he attempted to relieve with quinine and mild doses of opium. Dr. Ives records: "Mr. Clive's wretched Health will not

[27] *Pigot Papers.*
[28] *Orme Papers.*
[29] *Fort William MS. Records.*
[30] *Pigot Papers.*

abide his extream Labour, nor yet ye Climate of this Country; besides which, he wastes his remaining Energy on Black Whores, to ye Detriment of his bodily & spiritual Well-being, despoil'd by ye enervating Loss of Semen & of Moral Sensibility, ye which debillitates all Reason & Sanity."

On January 3, 1757, Colonel Clive (in the name of the Company) and Admiral Watson (in the name of the Crown) had published a declaration of war against Nevâb Sirájuddawleh, "according to the Maxims and Rules of all Nations, untill ample Restitution be made the East India Company . . . for all Damages and Losses sustain'd by them." This manifesto was issued "in Consideration of the several Acts of Hostility and Violence already premised." [31]

"The die is cast," Clive remarked. "If the Nabob cannot be brought to reason, 'tis war to the death." Which caused Watson to quote the parable of the Kilkenny cats, "who fought till nought was left but their Tails." Clive was not amused.[32] Repairing and strengthening the fortifications of Calcutta, he penned to Pigot: "I may assure you, Ft. William can never be taken again by the Moors but by Cowardice." [33] This was a slap at Drake and Council, who also wrote to Madras: "We can not conceive by what Authority You have assumed a Right in giving that Gentleman [Clive] the Powers you have done, and therein treating Us in the Light of a Subordinate." [34] Pigot and Council ignored their objections.

The fortified town of Hooghly, upriver from Calcutta, was held by five thousand Bengalis; but Major Kilpatrick, with five gunboats and several hundred troops, breached and stormed it. Drake and Council informed the Court of Directors: "The Capture & Destruction of Hooghly was esteem'd essential to strike a Terror in the Nabob's Troops. . . . This, we have Reason to believe, has had the desired Effect and thrown the Country into a vast Consternation." They added audaciously: "One of the first Steps we took after our Return [to Calcutta] was to write to the Zumeendars [landlords] of the neighbouring Pergunnahs [districts] to pay the Rent & Revenues of their respective Districts into our Treasury, on Pain of having their Country

[31] *Orme Papers.*
[32] *Ives Journal.*
[33] *Pigot Papers.*
[34] *Fort St. George MS. Records.*

destroy'd in case of Refusal. . . . By this Means, We have Hopes of easing the Company considerably in the Charges of the Operations it may be expedient to carry on against the Nabob." [35] This wholesale shakedown of Bengali landocracy was violently opposed by Clive as an outrage unwittingly designed to alienate potential allies, but his protests fell on deaf ears.

Nevàb Sirájuddawleh Khán Behádur, furious at the recapture of Calcutta and the seizure and sacking of Hooghly, hustled off a messenger to the French governor of Chandernagore (Pierre Renault) and invited him to join forces in hostilities against the English. But the Governor's orders were to maintain neutrality, *coûte que coûte*, so he graciously declined the tempting offer. In desperation, the Nevàb made known to Clive and Watson: "If you imagine that by carrying on a war against me you can re-establish your trade in my dominions, you are welcome to try." [36] He again communicated with "the greatest of merchants, the model of true friends," Gouverneur Renault: "If it please Allah, help me punish this faithless people [the English] and chase them from this country; and I will lavishly reward you with the bounty of my goodwill." [37] The bait? A lakh (100,000) of rupees, abolition of the annual imposts on French-Indian commerce, and the establishment of a mint at Chandernagore. But much as he may have wanted to, M. Renault dared not rise to the bait—and suffer the fate of the great Dupleix.

Sirájuddawleh's attempted purchase of the French demonstrated a justifiable lack of confidence in his own people, who supported him halfheartedly if at all. The French knew this as well, and it would have been the height of folly for them actively to aid an unpopular and irrational prince whose days were numbered.

In desperation, Sirájuddawleh launched a horde of fifteen thousand foot, eighteen thousand horse, and forty guns against the City of Palaces, which Clive defended with eight hundred Europeans, fifteen hundred Indians, and fourteen field pieces. The horde was sighted outside Calcutta on February 2, an even month after the town was retaken. At three A.M. on the third, Clive marched out of Calcutta to meet his challengers. Not inclined to stand siege, with all its risky

[35] *E.I.C. Records.*
[36] *Tárikh-i-Mansúrí.*
[37] *Ibid.*

restrictions, he calculated that an entrenched position outside the walls would afford him free field for a decisive flank movement. Besides, attack is the best defense. "We are encamp'd with our little Army," he wrote to his wife, "and the Nabob is at the Head of 40,000 Men to give us Battle. I am in Hopes every thing will be concluded to the Company's Advantage, tho' not in so glorious a Manner as I could wish." [38] Clive saw no glory in fighting a "brainsick boy" and a "rabble horde" that might run away at the first shot. He added to Pigot: "We are in a very good Condition to act defensibly against his [Sirájuddawleh's] whole Army, and hope to finish every thing by a decisive Stroke." [39]

Awed by this demonstration of defiance, Sirájuddawleh sent an emissary into the British camp to negotiate a settlement. That emissary was Ámíchand Mahájan. Having been forcibly circumcised, imprisoned, and further defiled by suffering cowflesh to be shoved down his throat, this oily Brahman had gotten back in the Neváb's good graces by procuring him lascivious dancing-boys from Kashmir. He had then purified his befouled body by swallowing the blessed *panchagavya*, an ambrosial concoction of the five products of sacred Mother Cow: milk, curds, butter, urine, and dung.[40]

While pandering to the Neváb, whom he hated like poison, Ámíchand had been secretly in communication with Clive. Whichever side won, he would succeed—or so he thought.

"Praise the Supreme Spirit that Calcutta is restored to its former splendor by your arrival, O Sábit Jang! It has been my constant prayer that the Omnipotent would bring my masters back into the country. My prayers have been answered." (Clive nodded indulgently.) "Ámíchand can never forgive," the Brahman added unctuously, in defense of his double-dealing.

"Nor can Sábit Jang," Clive replied coldly. "Englishmen have also suffered at the hands of that fiend, and there can be no reconciliation. Tell Sirájuddawleh that Sábit Jang smells his treachery, and that Sábit Jang will rid Bengal of Sirájuddawleh as one would rid his house of a rat." [41]

[38] *Clive Papers.*
[39] *Pigot Papers.*
[40] Husayn Khán.
[41] Kerem 'Alí; *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

Sirájuddawleh was jolted when told these things, but not so jolted as when, on February 5, Clive with two thousand shock troops and six guns beat up his quarters in a thick morning fog. Sloshing across rice paddies and irrigation ditches, through soupy mist, the raiders pierced to the heart of Sirájuddawleh's encampment. Thirteen hundred Hindustanis were wiped out by this coup, among them two dozen noblemen and chiefs, which demonstrated, as Clive put it, "what an Army of Englishmen can do to a Rabble in Arms." [42] And Clive's charmed life, which was already fabled as a miracle in India, was exemplified anew by the death of his adjutant and aide-de-camp at his side, while he emerged unscathed.

In his terror, Sirájuddawleh was now ready to bow to Clive's will. "I present you with a proposal for peace," he wrote at once, "and am prepared (please Allah!) to submit to whatever terms are agreeable to you." [43] A less exacting man than Robert Clive would have accepted the proposal with pleasure, and a sigh of relief. But he knew the fickle and treacherous character he was dealing with. He replied, "Be pleased to know that I marched my troops through Your Excellency's camp simply to show you what an army of Englishmen are capable of doing, and it may also please you to know that I was careful to avoid hurting anybody save those [thirteen hundred!] who actually opposed my progress. Therefore, allow me to express my willingness to accede to Your Excellency's proposal for a suspension of hostilities and to negotiate a peace as soon as is practicable." [44]

Withdrawing his forces, the Nevàb opened immediate negotiations. If all this carnage and confusion had been wrought by a mere march through his camp, what in Allah's name would be the result if Clive took it into his head to attack him tooth-and-nail!

On February 6, from his camp outside the city, Colonel Clive communicated with Admiral Watson at Fort William:

> *The Nabob has decamp'd with his whole Army, has wrote me a Letter that he will comply with All our Demands: viz., that he will put us in Possession of every thing granted by the Royal Firmaun* [or free-trade charter enacted by Ferrukhsiyer in 1717], *Liberty to*

[42] *Clive Fieldbook.*
[43] Kerem 'Alí.
[44] *Tárikh-i-Mansúrí.*

fortify Ft. Wm. as we please, and the Liberty of a Mint. He concludes with desiring me to sign these Proposals, and that he will sign & seal them immediately; that he will send me a Seerpah [ceremonial suit of honor], *Elephant & Jewells.*[45]

Watson replied at once: "I am now fully convinced the Nabob's Letter was only to amuse us, in order to cover his Retreat & gain Time till he is re-enforced, which may be attended with very fatal Consequences; . . . for till he is well-thrash'd, don't, Sir, flatter yourself he will be inclined to Peace. Let us therefore not be over-reach'd by his Politicks, but make Use of our Arms, which are more to be depended upon and, I dare say, will be much more prevalent than any Treaties or Negotiations." [46]

When two days passed without any word from the Neváb, Clive suspected that Watson's suspicions were justified. Sirájuddawleh was playing for time, praying that Allah would somehow extricate him from his impasse. Clive dispatched an ultimatum: "I am surprised that you trifle. I observe that you are not inclined to agree to our proposals. Allah is my witness that my actions have been open and generous, and that my inclinations are for peace. If you agree to our proposals, there will be peace. If not, war must take its course. My sword is drawn, and it shall never be sheathed until you grant the English all due justice." [47] This notification had the desired effect.

Sirájuddawleh gave the English everything they wanted, signing a treaty (February 9) stipulating that all moneys, properties, and trading privileges of the East India Company should be restored or compensated for; that all its goods should pass tax-free; and that all enemies of *Kampení Behádur* should henceforth be treated as enemies by the Viceroy of Bengal. One of the provisions, that the "Moors" should not "molest" any of the English merchants or inhabitants of Bengal, served as a safeguard against future atrocities.

The settlement was then signalized by gifts of a richly caparisoned elephant, a *khil'at* or ceremonial robe of honor, and a jeweled turban to Sábit Jang Behádur—may Allah preserve him! During the ceremony, the Neváb covenanted with Clive: "I have, in the most solemn

[45] *Orme Papers.*
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] *Tárikh-i-Mansúrí.*

manner, called Allah and the Prophets to witness that I have made peace with the English. As long as I have life, I shall consider your enemies as my enemies and will assist you to the utmost of my power, whenever and wherever you may require it." [48] By this declaration, which involved touching the Holy Qurán with as much reverence as Christian perjurers who swear on the Holy Bible, Sirájuddawleh had (in effect) allied himself with the English against the French. It was a posture that would soon prove most uncomfortable to him. But the longer he assumed it, the more time he had to find a safe way to vacate it. Forethoughtedly, Clive advised the Court of Directors: "As the Nabob is a very weak Prince, and entirely actuated by Fear, a respectable Force in these Parts will always make him cautious how he undertakes any thing against us." [49]

Court historian Saiyed Ghulám Husayn Khán, who sat close enough to Clive and Sirájuddawleh to view the ceremony in detail, states that

> *It did not entail the mere mutual touching of genitals* (lámisat-i-'awreh) *above the garments, as is usual in pledges of honor; but, by the Nevább's suggestion, each grasped the other's phallus* (heryek zakr-i-dígeryek bi-dast girifteh) *beneath their robes, thus giving the covenant a more inviolate meaning in the minds of the Emirs. However, the perverted youth later confessed that he suggested such a pact in order to test his enemy's manhood: that the pressure and slight movement of his hand provoked an erection in Clive* (fishár-o-herakat-i-khefíyi-dastish rástíyi-Sábit Jang khízánídeh), *as indeed Clive's touch did in him, which gave him personal proof of his foe's circumcision. Rumors and reports thereof, sent from the Deccan, had intrigued him.*
>
> *Now he stood in awe of his adversary, for Hindu soothsayers had predicted his downfall by a circumcised Unbeliever* (káfir-i-khutneh, *"infidel of the cut"); albeit he salved his spirit by boasting that his rod* (kír) *was longer if not thicker than Sábit Jang's, and that a long rod (not a short club) was emblem of empire.*

According to William Watts, English ambassador at the Court of Murshidabad, Sirájuddawleh once burst at him in a fit of derision:

[48] Husayn Khán.
[49] *E.I.C. Records.*

"Há! Sábit Jang jalq kerdam!" (Watts' orthography: *Sabut Jung julk curdum*), which literally means *"Ha!* I jerked Sábit Jang," a variation of one of the foulest of Persian insults (*Jalq kerdamat*, "I jerked you") equivalent to the Arabic *yá mezlúq* (O bejerked) and *yá menyúk* (O beferked).[50] The remark would have passed as a mere gibe were it not for Husayn Khán's revelation, *"herakat-i-khefíyi-dastish"* (slight movement of his hand), intimating masturbation. And the vulgarism *jalq* (to jerk off), implying far more than "slight movement," was doubtless aimed at degrading Clive to puerile or pubertal proportions and propensities; for (in Rae's words) "Ye Moorish Youths, in Despite of Circumcision, are flagrant Toss-pricks ["jerkoffs," from the Georgian English "toss off": to masturbate]." If Clive was a compulsive masturbator, as evidence alleges, the barb dug deep. *Jalq*, to a Muslim, was considered laughable if not unmanly after puberty; and manual abuse of male victims, during anal rape, perfected an act of defilement.

Of anthropological note is the ancient custom of testifying on the genitalia, whence the Latin words *testes* (the two witnesses) and *testiculi* (the little witnesses). In the Islamic world, as elsewhere, men solemnly swore by and upon their *zakr* (token of manhood) either individually or mutually, simply because of the sacred phallic symbolism of truth. If erection occurred, the oath was doubly sealed; for this allegedly indicated manliness and potency, tokens of honor. If semen was elicited by manipulation, the covenant became further symbolic of absolute truth by its enactment of a process essential to the propagation of the species: spermatic ejaculation. Hence, however Sirájuddawleh intended or professed it, his purported arousal of Clive's reproductory organs was ideologically honorable. Yet nothing of honor is implied in the Bengali saying, *"Sábit Jang-ká-dánd Sirájuddawleh-ká-gánd mén hay"* (Clive's pole is in Sirájuddawleh's hole), in allusion to Clive's forbearance and his suspected aspiration to rule Bengal in league (*kír fí-kún*, penis in anus) with the Neváb.[51]

The personal losses of individuals, some of whom had been ruined by the looting of Calcutta, were not covered by the treaty. Though Clive himself was among those who were not indemnified, he was severely criticized by Governor Drake and members of Council for

[50] *Watts Journal.*

[51] *Tárikh-i-Mansúrí*; see Edwardes' *The Jewel in the Lotus*, pp. 65–68.

having rushed into an arrangement that left much to be desired. But of course, "the Loss of private Property, and the Means of recovering it, seem to be the only Objects which take up the Attention of the Bengall Gentlemen." Clive explained to E.I.C. Chairman John Payne: "If I had consulted the Interest & Reputation of a Soldier, the Conclusion of this Peace might easily have been suspended." [52] Payne, in his reply, ascribed to Clive no "mean or selfish Views," and expressed "a perfect Sense of . . . the Difficulty of pleasing every one." Noting his awareness of the jealousy aroused by Clive's "Unlimited Powers," he added pointedly: "I must confess, I should think them dangerous in other Hands than yours." Payne, who trusted Clive's motives, would hear nothing of accusations that the nabob aspired and conspired to seize Sirájuddawleh's rod of empire.[53]

On February 11, the Neváb of Bengal retired to his palace at Murshidabad. An embittered youth was he, already brooding how best to gain vengeance. Clive wrote his wife that "This Expedition is attended with nothing but Reputation. I expect to return very shortly to the Coast, as all is over here. A firm & hopefully lasting Peace has been effected." [54] To Maskelyne, also at Madras, he stated that his sortie through the Neváb's camp was "the warmest Service I ever yet was engaged in," adding that such a demonstration was "greatly to the Honour & Advantage of the Comp'y; the Boldness of Design & Vigour of Execution terrify'd the Nabob." [55] He then dispatched a detailed description of his feat to, among others, Prime Minister the Duke of Newcastle, to Paymaster General Fox, to Lord Archbishop Herring, to the new War Secretary Lord Barrington, and to Lord High Chancellor the Earl of Hardwicke, begging leave of them ("if You think me deserving") to recommend him to the E.I.C. Court of Directors. In a letter to his father, Clive elaborated on his ambitions: "As this Success has probably saved the Co., this is a proper time to push my Interest. I am desirous of being appointed Governour-Gen'l of India, if such an Appointment should be necessary; however, I would have you manage this Affair with great Prudence & Discretion, and not mention the Word *Gov'r-Gen'l* without you find it hinted at

[52] *Orme Papers.*
[53] *Ibid.*
[54] *Clive Papers.*
[55] *Maskelyne Papers.*

by other Hands." [56] (Old Richard had become one of his celebrated son's most vociferous lobbyists in London's Whitehall and Leadenhall Streets, much to the distress of many Government and Company bigwigs.) Finally, "It can not be expected [Clive penned to the Right Honourable Chairman] that the Princes of this Country, whose Fidellity is always to be suspected, will remain firm to their Promises & Engagements from Principle only; it is, therefore, become absolutely necessary to keep up a respectable Force in this Province for the Future." [57]

Clive's desire to become the Company's chief executive in the East Indies arose from a need that was growing ever more apparent. The "heaven-born" soldier's political and administrative abilities were seeking expression. A sagacious statesman was required to harmonize the conflicting councils of Madras and Calcutta, each of which claimed precedence over the other. While Pigot & Co. urged Clive to return immediately to the Coast with his troops, owing to a report that three thousand French regulars and nineteen warships were en route from Brest to Pondicherry, Drake & Co. demanded that he keep his troops in Calcutta for the same reason. Wherever one happened to be, Fort William or Fort St. George, the situation seemed precarious. Much as he may have wanted to return to "the Coast," Clive was bound to Bengal by ties of responsibility and self-interest. Peace there was on paper, to be sure; but was it also in the hearts of such men as Sirájuddawleh and Renault?

Orme expressed the sentiments of those in Madras who were disappointed and dismayed at The Hero's decision to disregard Pigot's appeal and heed Drake's: "The Prevalence of Clive's Genius is, by what I have observed of it, to be Fighting. That he is not averse to Advantages is certain; and if both these Prospects have united, I am no longer surprized that he has lost his Reason on this Occasion." [58] It appeared that Clive had pulled a double-cross, that he had sold out to "that Bengall Crew" in expectation of seizing supreme power there. But much as Clive detested Drake and his ilk, he felt duty-bound to watch over Bengal so long as it was governed by a fanatic and exploited by weaklings. The day he left, it was feared, "ye Treaty will

[56] *Clive Papers.*
[57] *Orme Papers.*
[58] *Ibid.*

serve to wipe ye Nabob's Fundament" and the French be "emboldenʼd to buss His Excellency's Arse." [59]

William Smith King, Clive's chief London attorney, was now writing to his client: "Col. Clive was *again* in all ye News-papers. I believe You have made a Maxim of what I have somewhere read, that 'A Man who has got himself a great Name should every now & then strike some *Coup d'éclat* to keep up ye Admiration of ye People.'" [60]

[59] *Watts Journal.*
[60] *Orme Papers.*

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THE CAPTURE OF CHANDERNAGORE

Now that England and France were officially at war, Gouverneur Pierre Renault of Chandernagore was minded to accept Sirájuddawleh's bribes. As Clive had anticipated, the Neváb no sooner reached Murshidabad than he was again in secret communication with the French, urging them to break the truce and aid him in driving the English out of Bengal. But M. Renault played for time, awaiting reinforcements from Pondicherry.

Meantime, Colonel Clive pondered when, how, and whether or not to challenge the French. Pigot urged him, since he insisted on remaining in Bengal, to attack Chandernagore and reduce that menace. "As you have concluded a Peace with the Nabob, you have no better Excuse for tarrying there." [1] "If we attack Chandernagore," Clive answered, "we can not stop there; we must go farther. Having establishʼd ourselves by Force, and not by the Consent of the Nabob, he by Force will endeavour to drive us out again." [2] But Pigot was insistent; and the question of honor seemed to be settled when Clive learned, through Ámíchand, that Renault was now reacting favorably to Sirájuddawleh's blandishments. He was so disposed, of course,

[1] *Orme Papers.*
[2] *Ibid.*

merely to safeguard French interests against possible English aggression; but such a disposition might be exploited by the Nevàb, who appreciated the European strategy of "divide and conquer." Such exploitation began when Sirájuddawleh sent Renault a hundred thousand rupees (one lakh) for "defense purposes." He then immediately dispatched fifteen hundred warriors to Hooghly, which the plundering English had abandoned, with orders to intercept Clive's anticipated advance.

Ámíchand, the Company's secret agent at the Nevàb's court, was joined by a born diplomat: Mr. William Watts. Being "well-versed in the Country Language, and in their Politicks & Customs," Watts, who had a score to settle with Sirájuddawleh, risked his life to ruin the French-Indian intrigue. On February 18, he wrote to Clive from "Coss [two miles] above Hooghly":

> *Omychund [Ámíchand] is return'd from Hooghly & has had a meeting with Nundcomar Roy [Nandkumár Rái], who is Devaun [local governor], and has learnt from him that Messengers had arrived with a Present of a Lack [100,000] of Rupees from ye Nabob to ye French Comp'y, with Orders to Nundcomar to assist ye French with all his Force in case ye English should attack Chandernagore. . . . Omychund, upon this, advizes ye Attacking of Chandernagore immediately, and not to be apprehensive of ye Nabob; . . . that he has concerted Measures with Nundcomar, who hath engaged to delay Matters so as to prevent any Assistance coming to ye French from ye Nabob. . . . Further, Omychund hath promised (in behalf of ye English) that if Nundcomar keeps Neuter, and by his Policy prevents any Assistance arriving from ye Nabob to ye French, that We will then make him a Present of 10 or 12,000 Rupees & use our Interest to continue him in ye Gov't of Hooghly. . . . Omychund . . . thinks ye Necessity of our Affairs require it, . . . as this is such a venal Gov't in which nothing is to be effected without Money or a very superior Force.*[3]

Clive said the affirmative secret word (*guláb-ká-phúl*, rosebud) to the special mounted messenger from Watts and Ámíchand, and thus was Nandkumár bribed for thirty (not a mere ten or twelve) thousand rupees to betray his master the Nevàb. This seems unusual when

[3] *Ibid.*

one considers that the Brahman's annual salary amounted to six hundred thousand, but not so unusual when one considers Sirájuddawleh's unpopularity with his people—especially Hindus. And there was also the more significant fact that "Omychund & Nundcomar are much enamour'd of each other, and are (to all Rumours) carrying on ye most odious Affair." [4] Indeed, an anonymous chronicler in the *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí* puts it even more bluntly:

> *Nandkumár Rái was so smitten with Ámíchand, and with Ámíchand's newly circumcised organ, that he agreed to sell his sovereign out for a mere pittance; and the extent of their mutual lust was such that Ámíchand urged Nandkumár to become circumcised in order that he should better enjoy the perversions they willfully perpetrated upon each other, for it would seem that Nandkumár's foreskin was a trifle too tight. So Nandkumár acquiesced: impelled also by the knowledge that Sábit Jang was thus disposed, and by the foolish assumption that circumcised Infidels would win the especial favor of this strange new conqueror. As Allah willed it, the greedy Hindu was so sore for many weeks after the operation that he lost all affection for the wretch who had corrupted him!*

On February 19, the Neváb of Bengal sent another appeal to the Nizám of the Deccan (Selábat Jang) and to politico-military attaché Comte de Bussy at Hyderabad: "These disturbers of my country, Colonel Clive and Admiral Watson, are plotting to war against the Governor of Chandernagore, Mr. Renault. I, who in all things seek the good of mankind, will assist him in every respect. I have applied to you for two thousand French soldiers. I trust you have already sent them." [5] He then notified the "disturbers" of his country: "If you are determined to besiege the French at Chandernagore, I shall be necessitated by honor to assist them with my troops." [6]

Watts, who played a deep game, cautioned Clive not to be "dumbcow'd" by Sirájuddawleh. It was his contention that the Neváb must be dealt with "in ye Mode of ye Court; that is, by opposing Corruption with Corruption, making Friends of ye Mammon of Unrighteousness, and getting upon even Ground with those whom We are

[4] *Watts Journal.*
[5] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
[6] Husayn Khán.

obliged to contend." [7] Writing to Clive, Watson, Drake, and Council, Watts added:

> *His [Sirájuddawleh's] governing Principle or reigning Passion is Fear, and by that alone is he to be sway'd; therefore, if We attack & take Chandernagore, every part of our Agreement [treaty] will be fulfill'd & more Indulgences granted Us. If We are unsuccessfull, We shall get nothing; and if a Neutrallity is concluded with ye French, no Chicanery, Artifice or Cunning will be left untry'd to delay putting Us in Possession of what ye Nabob hath assented to. [He later repeated] By what I can learn of ye Nabob's Disposition, there is not ye least Stress to be lay'd on his Word or Oath. Fear is ye onely Means to prevail with him.*[8]

Was Watts right, or had he lost his reason? Was his hatred of the Nevâb blind? Did he have the Company's interest truly at heart, or was he merely concerned with causing a showdown that would avenge his ill-treatment and requite his depredation at the hands of "ye fanatick Moors"? Who could say for sure! Watts' understanding of Indian psychology was unassailable; and Watson, for one, did not question it. "I can by no means think of agreeing to a neutrality," he proclaimed in Council on March 3, "whereby it is so evident the French will have every advantage and we subject to every uncertainty. Will they not reap immediate benefit by such a neutrality? And further, shall we be certain of its being complied with till it is ratified and confirmed by the Governor and Council of Pondicherry? This appears to me to be giving so sensible an advantage to the French, without even a possibility of benefiting by it ourselves." [9]

Watts wanted war, for his own reasons. Watson wanted neither war nor peace, for his own reasons. Drake and Council wanted absolute power, by either war or peace, for their own reasons. Clive wanted . . . *what?* He remained purposefully silent. The honor of England was at stake in India, and foolish men were determined to sacrifice it for selfish motives. Clive no longer deluded himself that the taking of Chandernagore would settle Company affairs in Bengal. It would, indeed, provoke Pondicherry into retaliation by an assault

[7] *Orme Papers.*
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ives Journal; Fort William MS. Records.*

on Madras; and Clive, tied down by an inevitable war with Sirájuddawleh, would not be free to return to the Coast in such an event. He now, as never before, envisioned the risks—how one reckless move might precipitate disaster. He therefore wrote (March 4) to the Calcutta Council: "If the Neutrallity [with the French] be refused, do but reflect, Gentlemen, what will be the Opinion of the World of these our late Proceedings. . . . What will the Nabob think, after the Promises made him on our side & after his consenting to guarantee this Neutrallity? He (and all the World) will certainly think that we are Men without Principles, or that we are Men of a trifling insignificant Disposition." [10]

But Clive was whistling down the wind. On the following day, at a meeting of Council, Admiral Watson repeated "his Belief that no Frenchman in India hath Power to conclude a binding Treaty, and that therefore he can not consent to the Treaty; also saying that he can not break his Engagements with the Nabob, by attacking Chandernagore, untill he hath full Assurance that the Nabob doth not intend to carry out his Promises." It was then "Agreed to request the Admiral either to re-consider his Objections to the Treaty [proposed with the French] or to assist Us with his Squadron to attack Chandernagore without Delay." [11] He would do neither. Nothing, no one, could change his mind.

Drake and Council besought Clive to quit camp and return to town at once. Matter of urgent and utmost importance! More than ever, Clive saw the decisive need of a governor general—a governor general who served the Company's interest—not cross-purposes of men each intent on his own interest. "God damn 'em all!" he responded, and wrote before arriving at Fort William:

> *You may be assured, the Instant the French find their Offers of Neutrallity refused, they will immediately assist the Nabob in all his Designs against us, if he has the least Intentions of not complying with the late Articles of Peace. It may then be too late to wish Mr. Watson had been pleased to pay more Attention to our Representations. . . . I must therefore request You will join with me in desiring Mr. Watson a Third Time to ratify the Neutrallity . . . ; and if*

[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid.*

he refuses, to desire he will attack Chandernagore by Water immediately, as I am ready to do by Land . . . ; and if he refuses this likewise, he becomes responsible for every Misfortune that may happen to the E. I. Company's Affairs.[12]

Arrived at Calcutta, Clive confronted Watson who refused to budge. Sick and tired of playing the "true Briton" to men of flexible honor, Clive then determined to break the deadlock by chicanery. He would offer Renault a makeshift treaty of neutrality, thereby weakening the French-Nevâb alliance and obliging Sirájuddawleh to withdraw his military support. When no reinforcements arrived from Pondicherry, M. Renault agreed to sign such a provisional pact. What did he have to lose? But obstinate Admiral Watson, representing the Crown, flatly refused to affix his signature to a "deceitful document."

Clive then argued that if the old neutrality had become nullified by a European war, no new pact would serve to keep the "treaty-breakers" from intriguing with the Nevâb. It would, however, put Sirájuddawleh in awe of the English. He dared not attack them again without the full and open support of France, which could not be given so long as the truce was observed. But Watson was inflexible.

There were several days more of stormy controversy, Clive pounding the conference table with his fist and Watson thumping the floor with his cane, but the deadlock remained unbroken.

For the time being, Watson had won the battle of wills. But Clive wouldn't brood for long. He would find a way, or make one.

Fate soon played into his hands. In 1754, 'Álemgír (son of Mughal Emperor Muhammed Sháh) avenged his father's murder in a military *coup* that deposed Ahmed Sháh, Nádir's assassin and successor. Ahmed fled to Kandahar, where he was still recognized as Sháh of Afghanistan. In February of '57, Ahmed Sháh again swooped down upon Delhi with his hordes of Pathan tribesmen and wrested it from the Grand Mughal 'Álemgír, whom he castrated and enslaved. The "host of hell" now stood before the gates of the "Eden of India," and Sirájuddawleh Khán was terror-shaken. "Lest these barbarians overwhelm us both," he at once wrote to Clive, "in Allah's name I beg you to march to my immediate assistance with your army. If it please Allah, I will pay you a lakh (100,000) of rupees a month for your

[12] *Ibid.*

services. I trust (Allah willing!) that you are agreeable to acting upon your pledge in our recent treaty: namely, to assist me in the event or imminence of foreign or domestic aggression." [13] Clive read the lengthy and urgent letter aloud to the Calcutta Council, then laughed and remarked: "Well, gentlemen, I expect we've finally got Jupiter by the ballocks. Now, by God, there's nothing for it but to squeeze!" [14]

We find in the official records of Fort William, March 7: "As . . . We may possibly get the Nabob's Permission to attack the French if We make it a Condition of assisting him against the Puttans [Pathans, Afghans], . . . Col. Clive & Maj. Killpatrick are in favour of advancing on Chandernagore on the chance of getting the Nabob's Permission." [15] Clive had written to Sirájuddawleh: "If we consent to assist you against the Afghans, you must consent to assist us against the French." [16] The Neváb replied: "The French are my tenants, and desire my protection. What am I to do: throw one guest out of my house, and allow the other to stay? If you will be my friend, and send me immediate assistance against the Afghans, I will reconsider your proposal." [17]

On the same day that Council heard Clive's and Kilpatrick's arguments in favor of an advance on Chandernagore, three warships carrying three hundred British reinforcements from Bombay arrived at the mouth of the Hooghly; and Mr. Watts and Ámíchand, Clive's secret agents upriver, reported that they had bribed the Bengali governor of Hooghly (Nandkumár Rái) not to oppose passage of the troops through his territory. "He hath seal'd this Pledge," Watts added, "by suffering his Praeputium to be clipt off in Honour of Omychund & Sabut Jung Bahadre." [18]

Clive seized the opportunity. "If we march to Murshidabad," he told the members of Council, "we must perforce pass by Chandernagore. Now the French cannot be suffered to attack Calcutta while our backs are turned; so I should say that we dare not assist the Nabob at all, unless—aye, *unless*—Calcutta be made secure by the destruction

[13] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
[14] *Ives Journal.*
[15] *Fort William MS. Records.*
[16] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *Wilks MSS.* (*Maskelyne Papers*).

of the French." [19] He quoted Watts's letter of March 4: "If We march to his [Sirájuddawleh's] Aid, You would do well to attack Chandernagore en Route: thus, as it were, killing 2 Birds with 1 Stone." [20]

Admiral Watson cleared his throat in disapprobation, instantly stilling the mutter of approval and nodding of heads. "I'faith, Colonel Clive, 'tisn't right to attack the French without the Nabob's knowledge and sanction. I refuse to agree to such a measure unless and until his consent is obtained."

"By God, sirrah!" Clive roared. "We shall hear no more of your nonsense, if you please."

"Well! The lot of you may lack scruples, but I shall write to the Nabob myself and solicit his leave." [21] And so he did.

Clive also wrote: "You ask our assistance. Can we, with the least degree of prudence, march to you and leave our enemies behind us? How shall we then be able to defend ourselves at Calcutta? Let us take Chandernagore, and secure ourselves against any apprehensions from that quarter, and then we will assist you with every man in our power. If you are not amenable to reason, I now warn you that I shall kindle such a flame in your kingdom as all the water in the Ganges will not be able to put out." [22]

Though caught between two menaces, the Afghans and the English, Sirájuddawleh equivocally forbade the projected expedition against the French, lest he be forced to take sides and thus expose Bengal to an invasion by Ahmed Sháh. But Clive was willing to risk an Afghan offensive, knowing full well that the Nevább would throw in with him, so he determined to tempt fortune as planned. Sirájuddawleh's personal scribe, bribed by Watts and Ámíchand, reworded the reply to Clive and Watson to read in their favor: "You have understanding and compassion. If your enemy [the French] claim your protection with noble hearts, you will grant them mercy; but then you must be perfectly satisfied with the innocence of their intentions. If you are not, do whatever you think best. When I forbade you to attack Chandernagore, it was because the French are my tenants and

[19] Ives; *Journal of the Expedition to Bengall.*
[20] *Maskelyne Papers.*
[21] Ives.
[22] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

are entitled to my protection: not because I had any intention of assisting or favoring them to your detriment." [23] Ambiguous, yet scarcely approving, "This Letter [Watts scrawled in his diary] cut ye Gordian Knot & put an End to ye Debate." Had it not, a general order from the British Admiralty would have been sharp enough. It instructed "all Officers under the King to distress the Enemy [the French] as far as it is in their Power." [24] And Watts had sent his (false?) assurance with that half-phony missive: "Ye Nabob desires I should inform You that if You are determined to attack ye French, he will not inter-meddle or give them ye least Assistance." [25]

The Nevâb's answer was in accord with the Admiral's conscience, and the official orders from Whitehall were peremptory, so the expedition was immediately made ready for its upriver assault. Colonel Clive, commanding seven hundred Europeans and sixteen hundred sepoys, struck out by land; while Admiral Watson, with a squadron of gunboats and Clive's artillery, pushed up the Hooghly.

The French garrison at Chandernagore numbered about five hundred Europeans and three hundred Hindustanis. Governor Renault, anticipating Clive's offensive, had ordered his troops to strengthen the defenses and prepare to stand siege. Working day and night on the fortifications, they were not taken by surprise when the English were sighted by land and water. The French settlement stretched for two miles along the river bank. It was, in Clive's words, "a most magnificent & rich Colony" which Dupleix (when governor) had made the Paris of Bengal. Its fort, standing in the center, mounted ten 32-pounders on each of its four bastions. Facing the Hooghly on the south, six 24-pounders lined the ramparts; and an outwork, guarding the water gate, bristled with eight 32-pounders. All houses within a hundred yards of the fort having been demolished, batteries were erected to command the approaches; and it was certain that Chandernagore, if its defenders were equal to those of Pondicherry, could hold its own till ammunition and food ran out.

On March 13, M. Renault was served notice: "*Le Roy de l'Angleterre ayant déclaré la guerre à la France, je vous somme de par le Roy rendre la forteresse de Tchandernagore.*" (The King of England hav-

[23] *Ibid.*; *Fort William MS. Records* (in Persian).
[24] *Orme Papers.*
[25] *Ibid.*

ing declared war against France, I summon you in his name to surrender the fort of Chandernagore.) [26] Renault made no reply, which Clive regarded as an invitation to attack. The challenger then returned an invitation of his own, on little slips of paper tied around the shafts of arrows shot onto the ramparts of Fort d'Orléans: "*Amnistye aux déserteurs quy reviendray à leurs drapeaux & récompense aux officyers quy déserteray à nous.*" (Pardon to deserters who will rejoin their colors, and rewards to officers who will come over to us.) [27] Clive soon reported to Watson: "The only Artillery Officer at Chandernagore is come over to us. He gives a very favourable Account of Matters." [28] When the English were first spotted, Pierre Renault directed his chief of artillery, Lieutenant Cossart de Terraneau, to sink several ships in the only navigable channel, thus blocking access to the fort. Terraneau, tempted by bribes from Clive's spies, turned traitor. He scuttled the vessels in such a position as to leave a passage through which the English ships could navigate, then deserted to Clive with valuable intelligence. He later hanged himself in a fit of remorse.

Landing his guns and planting batteries around the fort, Clive began to bombard Chandernagore on March 19. Watson, directing three men-o'-war, inched up the narrow channel to shell the settlement with 174 pieces of ordnance. Renault entered in his journal:

> *Cossart de Terraneau, a lieutenant of this garrison who commanded the artillery and who had lost an arm in the wars on the Coast, deserted to the enemy on the evening of the nineteenth; and the same night, by the improved direction of the besiegers' bombs, I had no doubt that he had done us a bad service. His decision to desert may have arisen from a quarrel we had over the placing of guns: a quarrel that was merely the continuation of one provoked by his persistent venereal contact with an Indian prostitute suspected of being a spy for the English.*

This courtesan, believed to be the sister of the dancing-girl murdered by Sirájuddawleh, was indeed a secret agent, whose patron was Ámíchand. Watts, who did not mention her name, informed Clive:

[26] Renault, Pierre: *Journal.*
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Orme Papers.*

"She prostitutes her Charms to ye French Officers, urging upon them her Hatred of ye Nabob, whose Cods she has threaten'd to rip off with her Finger-nails, in Revenge of ye foul Murther of her Sister, a Courtezan from Delly. A Wench to be reckon'd with! She hath told Omychund aught of ye Enemy's Secrets." [29] Nothing more is known or said of her.

Cannonade raged day and night for nearly two weeks. Though he made a resolute stand, M. Renault hoped beyond hope that aid would arrive from the Neváb. Sirájuddawleh wrote to Clive, beseeching him to cease hostilities, but Clive ignored his appeals. Infuriated, the boy tyrant addressed his last letter "To the Daring in War, upon whom may evil fortune attend," demanding his immediate withdrawal to Calcutta. When this was ignored, the Viceroy of Bengal dispatched his Grand Vizier, Rájá Ráidulábh Rám, with a strong force to raise the siege. When Clive learned of this move from Ámíchand, he made of it a bluff that wanted calling. "I hear you are heading this way," he wrote to Rájá Ráidulábh. "Whether you come as a friend or a foe, I know not. If as a foe, say so at once; and I will send some soldiers out to fight you immediately. If as a friend, I beg you to stay where you are; for we can conquer the enemies we have to deal with here, even if they were ten times stronger." [30] Clive then sent this ironic note to Sirájuddawleh: "If you are determined to march this way, I cannot forbid it. I am much obliged to you for sending Ráidulábh in this direction, but I have no need of help. Since I persuade myself that it will please you to get good news from me, I therefore inform you that (by the blessing of Allah) I expect Chandernagore to fall into my hands tomorrow." [31]

Ámíchand, ever ready with lies and bribes, turned the menacing tide. He persuaded his lover, the governor of Hooghly, Nandkumár Rái, to urge Ráidulábh to retire; for "Chandernagore is about to surrender." [32] The vizier, not wishing to interfere at the moment of a capitulation, took his advice and fell back. And the French, in despair, laid down their arms. His guns dismantled, his bastions battered down, his garrison diminished, Pierre Renault hoisted a flag of truce.

[29] *Maskelyne Papers.*
[30] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] *Ibid.*

Thus is the current of events channeled by force, rechanneled by feint. The *Gouverneur*, his officers and officials, were taken as "Prisoners of Honour" (on parole never to bear arms again) and were given safe conduct to the neutral Dutch settlement at Chinsurah. While the terms of capitulation were being settled, Captain Coote's occupation troops went on a rampage of looting Chandernagore. When Coote failed to control them Clive promptly had several Europeans and sepoys hanged, then confiscated and destroyed the town's liquor supply. Fort d'Orléans was blown to rubble and the Paris of Bengal was reduced to Carthaginian ruins.

The capture of Chandernagore and the collapse of the French in Bengal cost the English 206 men. A cheap victory, considering its favorable and far-reaching effect. It was, as Clive imparted to Pigot, "an inexpressible Blow to the French Comp'y. . . . It is a very great Blow . . . of more Consequence to the [British] Co., in my Opinion, than the Taking of Pondicherry itself." [33] Such a blow further reduced French influence, and prestige. It secured the safety of Calcutta, made the English masters of commerce in the Ganges delta, and opened the way to complete conquest of the Eden of India. Its impact in England caused a boom in E.I.C. stock, which soared 12 per cent.

[33] *Pigot Papers.*

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PRELUDE TO PLASSEY

In his rage over Clive's triumph Nevâb Sirájuddawleh with his own hands cut off the ears and penises of two Muslim holy men who had prophesied Clive's downfall.[1] But still governed by his fears of an Afghan invasion, he communicated to Clive his "inexpressible pleasure" over "the news of your victory at Chandernagore, which I had long been impatient to hear. I thank Allah that your enemies, and

[1] Kerem 'Alí; Husayn Khán; *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

their great place, fell so easily into your hands. You no longer have any uneasiness on their account. It has pleased Allah to make you and all your friends happy in this great victory." [2] At the height of the Afghan threat, Sirájuddawleh had written to Clive: "Come as quickly as you can; for Allah knows, our friendship shall never cease. Do you not recall that we swore allegiance upon each other's genitals, as brothers of the salt? If you honor me, do not abandon me at this dark hour." [3] With the taking of Chandernagore, Ahmed Sháh (aware of Sirájuddawleh's alliance with the English) thought better of his designs on Bengal. He sent the Neváb a note, assuring him that he had no intention of disturbing the peace of his province. Sirájuddawleh immediately reported to Clive: "I look on this blessing as the effect of my friendship with you. I therefore write that you need not give yourself the trouble of coming." [4]

After the fall of Chandernagore, Admiral Watson returned to Calcutta with his warships. Colonel Clive, however, did not heed Sirájuddawleh's advice. Instead of falling back, he slowly advanced northward—"to strike some Awe into the Nabob & facillitate our Business at the Durbar [royal court]." [5] Getting wind of this, the Neváb bombarded him with no less than ten letters a day—"which the Colonel answer'd punctually, with all the Calmness and Complacence imaginable." [6]

A crisis was reached when Sirájuddawleh learned how Ráidulábh had been persuaded by traitor Nandkumár to withdraw his relief force; "for the French were unable to resist the English, and were about to surrender, and it was deemed imprudent that Your Excellency's victorious colors should be involved in their disgrace." [7] The "Beast of Bengal" then wrote to Clive, threatening to blow every "*bahinchód Inglistání*" (sisterfucking Englishman) to hell. "In attacking and defeating the French, whose only wish was to remain neutral and at peace, you have violated a treaty and alienated an ally. Allah knows, I will not suffer further defiance of my authority, but shall visit upon you the destruction which you have invited by your con-

[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Orme Papers.*
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

tempt." [8] Communicating with M. Godeheu at Pondicherry and Comte de Bussy at Hyderabad, as well as with Nizám Selábat Jang, Sirájuddawleh again urged them to help him drive the English aggressors out of India. "What can I write of the perfidy of the English?" he lamented. "They have, without cause, picked a quarrel with M. Renault and taken his town by force. They now want to quarrel with M. Law, your chief at Cossimbazar, but I will take care to oppose and overthrow their plans. Rest assured of my goodwill toward you and your Company, and the sooner you come here the greater satisfaction I shall have in meeting you." [9]

Two days later, upon hearing a rumor (started by none other than Ámíchand) that the Afghans were now plotting with the Marathas to divide his kingdom, the young tyrant dashed off letters of congratulations to Clive and Watson. "Allah has blest you with success! In accepting my felicitations, be pleased also to receive the territory of Chandernagore on the same terms whereof it was formerly held." [10] Clive said to Watson: "By fair means or foul, we must govern the Nabob through fear." [11] A couple of days later, having learned that the rumor was a lie, Sirájuddawleh flew into a new rage and ordered the army of Ráidulábh Rám to encamp at Plassey, a village some thirty miles south of Murshidabad, there to wait. He then threatened to castrate or even decapitate Watts and Ámíchand, Clive's peace ambassadors at the royal court. A threat oft repeated, oft repealed, according to the Viceroy's moods. One day they were loaded with abuse, the next day with presents. "There seems no End to this frightfull Madness!" [12]

It was five months since Clive had seen his wife, and he longed for her touch. But with Bengal in such an unsettled state, and with a demented despot still on the throne, he dared not think of leaving. "I feel we should remain in Bengall," Clive wrote to Pigot, "untill we settle every thing here in the most advantageous Manner for the Comp'y, and perhaps induce the Nabob to give up all the French Factories. This will be driving them out Root & Branch. I am well-

[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ives Journal.*
[12] *Watts Journal.*

inform'd, without Chandernagore, the [Mascarene] Islands must starve & Pondicherry suffer greatly." [13] Clive then forwarded a letter of instructions to Watts:

> *The Bent of our Politicks hitherto has been by haughty & by submissive Letters, such as the Occasion required, to persuade him [Sirájuddawleh] to abandon the French to us. We must, in persuit of that System, now endeavour to convince him that what we have done is best both for him & us. The Arguement that will best serve that Purpose must be drawn from their [the French's] Actions on the Coast of Coromandell, compared with ours on the same; that as soon as they had made themselves Masters of the Deccan, they would not have scrupled attempting the same here. Represent to him . . . that our sole View is to stop the ambitious Progress of the French.*[14]

With this went an ultimatum to Sirájuddawleh:

> *As long as England and France are at war in Europe, they will be at war in India; thus, there can be no peace for you in Bengal unless you act upon what will be to your advantage: the reduction and destruction of French influence. Trust me with your favor, and I will be faithful to you; but always remember that if you decide to break our treaty, which states that my enemies shall be your enemies, I will lay a torch to your country which all the waters of the Ganges will not suffice to extinguish.*[15]

Sirájuddawleh wasn't taken in by his "trickery." He knew that keeping up the Anglo-French rivalry and a balance of their power was his only hope. Instead of answering Clive's intimidating overture, the Nevàb again implored Comte de Bussy ("the Flower of Empire, the Sword of Fortune, the Victorious in War") to march to the aid of his ill-fated compatriots, if nothing else. He appealed to *esprit de corps*, and cursed *perfide Albion* in the same sentence. But to no avail. Until the arrival of reinforcements, Bussy was sitting tight. Both he and his supplicant were playing for time.

As long as the French ran a factory at Cossimbazar, ten miles south of the capital, the Court of Murshidabad would be a hotbed of in-

[13] *Pigot Papers.*
[14] *Orme Papers.*
[15] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

trigue against the English. Its chief factor, Jean-Marie Law, was now special ambassador to the *durbar;* and he was Watts's deadly rival as a diplomat and deceiver. "M. Law is become ye Nabob's Favourite, in & out of ye Zenanah [harem], where they swill & swive to their Hearts' Content." [16] Law writes:

> Le Nabab est un giton & une flûte, quy est embougrés, sucés & écorchés à ses mignons; et byen que nous foutons ensemble, il me regarde mays il ne me fayt des avances (peut-être parce que je suys incirconcys, et par conséquent "immonde"), quoyqu'une seule foys il me demanda m'abuser en son présence, quy byen entendu je refusay de fayre. Son prétexte: "On m'a dit que le prépuce rend l'onanisme & la sodomie le plus passionnant parce qu'il permet byen davantage violence de mouvement & de manipulation," auquel je luy répondys: "C'est sottise." *(The Nevâb is a fag and a flute who is buggered, sucked, and skinned by his favorites; and although we fuck together, he watches me but does not make any advances—perhaps because I am uncircumcised, and therefore "unclean"—though once he asked me to abuse myself in his presence, which of course I refused to do. His excuse: "They say the foreskin makes masturbation and sodomy more exciting because it allows greater violence of movement and manipulation"; to which I replied, "That's nonsense.")*

The Nevâb's violent reaction to Clive's ultimatum is described by Luke Scrafton, Watts's young and able assistant:

> *Young Minds can not keep Resentment long conceal'd; his Heart broke out to-day. When our Vackeel [native envoy, Ámíchand] went to him, the instant he [Sirájuddawleh] saw him he order'd him to be turn'd out of the Durbar. As the Fellow was going, he over-heard him say, "I will destroy them (the English) and their Nation." When asked the Reason, he said, "They are always writing me to deliver up the French; I will receive no more of their Letters." For God's Sake, let us pacify him for the present; things are not yet ripe [for a revolution].*[17]

Watts also related the stormy scene enacted in the royal court, adding: "Ye Nabob threaten'd to impale me, or cut off my Head &

[16] *Watts Journal.*
[17] Scrafton, Luke: *Letters* (April 23, 1757).

Privities, in ye Presence of his Courtiers. 'Have I not allready circumcized you?' he taunts continually. . . . Ye Nabob swears that his Patience is at an End, and that he will march against us. Oh, ye Fool! *Quos Deus vult perdere, prius dementat* [Whom God would destroy, He first makes mad]." [18]

Clive penned to Pigot:

> *From the Tyranny, Cowardice & Suspicion of the Nabob, no Dependence can be had upon him. One Day he tears up my Letters & turns out our Vackeel* [Ámíchand], *then orders his Army to march; he next countermands it, sends for the Vackeel & begs his Pardon for what he has done. Twice a Week he threatens to impale Mr. Watts, whom he forcibly circumcized at Cossimbazar, having abandon'd Threats of Castration & Decapitation. In short, he is a Compound of every thing that is bad, keeps company with none but his Menial Servants (all of whom are Fluters & Faggots) and is universally hated & despized by the Great Men* [*i.e., his officials*]. *This induces me to acquaint you there is a Conspiracy going on against him by several of the Great Men, at the Head of whom is the Chief Banker of Bengall himself, Juggut Seit* [*Jagat Séth*]. *I have been apply'd to for Assistance, and . . . I am persuaded there can be neither Peace nor Security while such a Monster reigns. Even his own People speak of him as "that imbecile Murderer, Sirajah-dowlah, who breaks Birds' Wings & cuts off Men's privities." And he was heard to declare, "I will destroy them (the English) and their Nation." You may very shortly expect to hear of a Revolution which will put an End to this Lunatick & to all French Expectations of ever settling in this Country again.*[19]

"I'faith," said Admiral Watson, "I suppose in all of India there is no prince with a worse reputation than this young scoundrel hath already gained for himself for profligacy and cruelty. He's constantly drunk, and if we can believe Watts, is surrounded by a crew of reprobates as wicked as himself." [20] Mr. Watts, among others, had told Clive and Watson that the dissipated dictator was a "Favourite" of lecherous dervishes and fakeers, whom he employed as soothsayers and sodomists. The "crack-brain'd Nabob" relished "Poggly-

[18] *Watts Journal.*
[19] *Pigot Papers* (expurgated copy in *Orme Papers*).
[20] *Ives Journal.*

nautches" or "Lunatick Ballets," orgies wherein effeminates were attended by painted and begowned catamites, and was a fulsomely notorious *gándmárá* or "anus-beater." Watts then commented: "Montaigne reasons that we weigh Vices not according to ye Vagaries of Nature, but according to our own Interest, by which Means they take so many unequal Forms. As ye Ancients express'd it: *Méden akhthesthès ei tais 'Athénaís é Korínthos eizeí* [Don't be surprised if Corinth (nerve center of heterosexual whoredom) yields to Athens (headquarters of homosexuality)]!" [21] The Musalman (like the Greek or Roman) sodomite was relegated to the realm of voluptuous vulgarians, but without his incurring condemnation. The manner in which he exercised his venereal apparatus was regarded, like masturbation, as merely another convenient method of attaining orgasm.

Watts also wrote: "His Lewdness is said to be possess'd of Virile Parts of such extra-ordinary Size, ye Man seems only an Appendage of his own Privates!" To which he added: "So much ye better doth it proffit a Moor to exercize his Member in stead of his Mind! However, ye bigger ye Tool, ye more a Man favours a Mule; for if 'tis tho't that to be well-hung is to boast greater Masculinity, then a Jackass is at once a compleat Hercules!" Citing Pascal's observation that "If Cleopatra's nose had been shorter, the whole face of history would have been different," Watts opined that "ye same may be said for ye *Mentula* of Mark Antony. . . . At Pompeii 'tis said there's a Fresco depicting a Debauchee, at ye Entrance of an Whore-house, weighing his enormous Phallus on a Scale; and ye Motto is that 'A good Workman is known by his Tools.' " [22]

Kher-nafseh (mule-man), in Persian, is metaphoric for "one having a big penis": the Sanskrit *ashvají* or "stallion-man." An unsigned note, in Clive's (transposition-cipher) handwriting and inserted in Watts's journal, responds thus to allegations of His Lewdness' "extraordinary Size":

> *tyeatreth keabrot niontteinshi sewshdan ntnavecoethfo yerckmoa skemaeh umrdcu lkju ngju tbusa tsasboehfi ergla onmmcountno mhidunfoi atthdan tyeatreth edntnaveco ewenwh htcrestethno eurasmeshi oktoiatth esulrcheonsi bbonaethatth dresuasstre.* (Rest assured

[21] *Watts Journal; Scrafton Letters;* Sykes, Francis: *Journal.*
[22] *Watts Journal; Maskelyne Papers.*

that the Nabob is no Hercules; that I took his Measure, on the Stretch, when we covenanted the Treaty; and that I found him not uncommon large. If he boasts "*Sabut Jung julk curdum* [I jerked Sábit Jang]," he makes a Mockery of the Covenant and shews his Intention to break the Treaty.)

Watts intimated that "All hope abandon, ye who enter here" should be inscribed on the vulva (or even hinder parts) of Sirájuddawleh's favorite wife, Bégam Lutfunnisá, because of her continual connivance against a much-hated husband. She was intolerant of his flagrant homosexuality, and had long since wearied of submitting to his "unnatural Embraces." Watts concludes his summary of Sirájuddawleh with these curious assertions:

As circumcized People are much given to Buggery & other unnatural Practices, to an inordinate Degree more than ye Uncircumcized, ye Connexion must be (it seems to me) that Circumcision is an Excitant to such Extravagances by its Exposure of ye most sensitive Parts to constant Friction, against which we Prepuce serves as a Protection. Ye Jews of ye Old Testament suffer ye Wrath of God as habitual Sodomites; alike ye Moors of India, whose early Addiction to Self-abuse leads them into Sodomy, as compared to ye uncircumcized Gentoos & Christians. Ye Confinement of Moorish Women in Purdah, and ye Condemnation of Prostitution & Fornication by ye Mohametan Faith, are also Spurs to Buggery among Boys, who have not ye Free Use of Girls enjoy'd by Gentoos & Christians, whose Customs (if not Religions) encourage Fornication & discourage Sodomy.[23]

Watts' connection of circumcision with homosexuality was not without contemporary logic; for European physickers then prescribed deprepucization as a cure for habitual masturbation and inveterate pederasty. Removal of the foreskin, though perhaps alleviating a possible physical irritation (e.g., phimsois), was thought also to relieve that inherent mental itch ("the Old Adam") never fully appreciated till the Age of Psychology. And circumcision, by concentrating narcissistic libido in an organ made irritable or hypersensitive by surgical denudation of the glans penis, has doubtless provoked compulsive

[23] *Watts Journal.*

masturbation in many cases while (as in Clive's condition) merely aggravating it in others.

As if to prove his point, Watts further observed in a confidential letter to Clive: "I fear that Omychund [Ámíchand], since his Circumcision, hath taken on All ye filthy Habits of ye Mohametans. In order to get Information, having affected Moorish Dress, he hath given himself up to vile Abuse; and it is his fond Excuse that 'for ye Sake of one's Belly, one must play many Parts.'" [24]

Clive, ever practical, replied in a postscript: "I can not see that Omychund is any more evil without, than he was with, a Foreskin. A Snake, tho' it shed its Skin, remains yet a Snake." [25] He recalled an old Hindu proverb: "A real Brahman when in the village, half a Brahman when seen from afar, and a Sudra when out of sight." Or, in European terms: "Lion at home, jackal abroad." When in Calcutta, Ámíchand was a model family man; when upcountry, a debauchee. Circumcision merely enabled him to handle Muslim secrets more freely than before his misfortune, his greatest liability as a spy having been removed with his prepuce, which had barred him from Muslim brothels, Bengal's most accurate intelligence agencies.[26]

Watts records (May 4, 1757):

> *I warn'd Omychund of ye extream Danger & Indellicacy of consorting with Paederasts & Pathicks, who may be in League with ye Nabob, to which he reply'd that they were a great Source of Information; that they hated ye Nabob for his Fanaticism, and could therefore be trusted to give over his Secrets. For ye first Time now, when I pozed a Question to him in Point of his apparent Debasement (as he was never known to commit Sodomy in Calcutta, but found his natural Satisfaction in Women), Omychund admitted that Circumcision had made his Pintle uncommon irritable; from which it would seem that Omychund was become a Satyr by this inconsiderable Loss!*

Law writes:

> Amytchend, un ambassadeur Gentou aux Anglays, est un espyon & un vilayn bougre; et c'est byen connu qu'il & Nendcoumar sont amants pathiques, et qu'il permit le Nabab (qu'il avayt sucé) l'écor-

[24] *Maskelyne Papers* (Abbé Dubois also observed this "fond Excuse").
[25] *Watts Journal* (insert).
[26] Kerem 'Alí; *Law Mémoires.*

cher & l'embougrer. Loutfounessa, quy j'ay foutu, me dit que son mary (qu'il soyt châtré!) ne voulut pas toucher à le Gentou quand il étayt incirconcys & par conséquent 'immonde'; mays depuys, le Nabab désira de manyer la verge retayllé d'Amytchend, pour découvrir s'il ayt pu encore d'avoyr du playsir & d'écrémer à l'écorchement. En apparence il ayt pu! À cet égard, le Nabab me fanfaronna qu'il eut érigé & écorché le grand goddam, qu'il me dit est circoncys. Vrayment! le retayllat héroïque d'Arkate, le mignon de Mahomet Aly. *(Ámíchand, a Hindu ambassador of the English, is a spy and a dirty bugger; and it is well known that he and Nandkumár are pathic [homosexual] lovers, and that he let the Neváb—whom he has sucked—skin and bugger him. Lutfunnisá, whom I have fucked, told me that her husband—may he be castrated!—would not touch the Hindu when he was uncircumcised and therefore "unclean"; but afterward, the Neváb desired to handle Ámíchand's clipped rod, to see if he could still get pleasure and cream off from milking [écorchement; stripping, skinning]. Apparently he could! In this connection, the Neváb fanfaronaded to me that he had erected and skinned the Great Goddam [Clive], whom he said was circumcised. Indeed! the Heroic Clipcock of Arcot, the favorite of Muhammed 'Alí.)*

Watson said: "I'faith, Omychund is the greatest villain on earth." "Perhaps," Clive replied. "But no man ever became extremely wicked all at once. He needed to work at it for many a year; so we should beware of the Nabob, who has only begun to degenerate. 'Tis said Tiberius used to torture men by tying their tools, so they could not piss, while he forced 'em to drink great quantities of water. Well, the Nabob has passed this up as mere child's-play—and he but yet a boy! There's no accounting for tastes, nor temperament; and in the case of Omychund, as Watts informs us, for the sake of his belly he must play many parts." [27]

[27] *Ives Journal.*

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THE CONSPIRACY

Sirájuddawleh answered Clive's ultimatum with abuse, which prompted Clive to notify William Watts that "After the Nabob's last Message, I can not depend upon his Friendship, and therefore shall get every thing ready for a March." He added, pointedly: "The Nabob is a Villain, and can not be trusted. He must be overset, or we must fall." [1] Having intercepted this message, Sirájuddawleh at once sent his uncle and commander-in-chief, Mír Ja'fer 'Alí Khán Behádur, with fifteen thousand warriors to join Rájá Ráidulábh Rám at Plassey. The stage was now being set for the final act. "Since (by your army's marching this way) the treaty must be broken and the kingdom suffer," Sirájuddawleh warned Clive, "I say unto you: if you do send an army this way, it is you who break the treaty and I am blameless. I have directed my generals, when they receive word of your having begun your march, to set out to meet you." [2] Clive did not answer the Neváb, but wrote to the Calcutta Council: "I am determined to waste no more Time in Arguement or Persuasion; the grave Quarrel with the Nabob admits of a decisive Solution: that of Force. I shall not willingly undertake any thing which may occasion a compleat Rupture, without I am obliged to it; notwithstanding, the Nabob's Behaviour makes it very difficult to persue peacefull Measures towards him. I await your Advice." [3]

On May 1, 1757, the Governor and Council of Fort William "decided that as the Nabob can not be relyed upon, a Revolution will be for the Interest of the Company." It was their contention that the Neváb's "Dishonesty and Insolence shew that the recently-made Treaty was concluded by him only to gain Time, . . . as shewn by his Intrigues with the French"; that "the Hatred felt for the Nabob

[1] *Orme Papers.*
[2] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
[3] *Fort William MS. Records.*

by every body makes it probable that there will be a Revolution whether we interfere or not, and it would be a Mistake not to assist a probable Successor and so obtain the Exclusion of the French"; that "upon the first favourable Opportunity, he will throw off the Mask under which he at present conceals an implacable Resentment and determined Resolution to ruin the English and extirpate them from his Country." They repeated, as if in self-reassurance: "The Nabob is so universally hated by all Sorts and Degrees of Men, the Affection of the Army is so much alienated from him by his Ill-Usage of the Officers, and a Revolution so generally wish'd for, that it is probable the Step will be attempted (and successfully, too) whether we give our Assistance or not." [4] Clive regarded this as the go-ahead to march on Murshidabad, there to force a showdown—and perhaps a revolution.

Jagat Séth had been the *Bará Mahájan* or Great Banker of Bengal. When Sirájuddawleh came to power, he confiscated Séth's holdings. When Jagat petitioned for reparation the Neváb slapped his face with a slipper (a foul insult to a high-caste Hindu) and threatened to circumcise him, an even fouler insult. The Great Banker plotted revenge. He and his fellow financiers conjured a conspiracy, aided and abetted by Ámíchand Mahájan, among the Neváb's most intimate flunkies. Most of them were eager to get rid of a ruler "whose ferocity kept them in alarm and whose fitfulness made them tremble," but they were deathly afraid of approaching each other with such a desire. Who could be trusted? It took an "outsider" to bring them together.

First to act upon Jagat Séth's proposal was Sirájuddawleh's diplomatic adviser, Mír Khudáyár Letíf Khán, who had been intriguing (in and out of bed) with Bégam Lutfunnisá. He and Jagat drew up a manifesto against the Neváb, sent it to Clive, and begged his assistance. "The elimination of this lunatic is, in our opinion," they wrote, "a common act of prudence to prevent our own ruin." [5] *Amen!* Clive thought, and immediately identified himself with the native conspiracy. Mír Ja'fer, Muslim soldier of fortune, had married a daughter of Neváb 'Alíverdí Khán and thus aspired to govern Bengal himself. He approached Clive through an Armenian merchant, promised secret

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Husayn Khán; Kerem 'Alí.

support, and dreamed of viceroyalty. Ráidulábh Rám, a shrewd prince possessed of great influence, was solicited but bided his time.

The first forthright solicitation from William Watts to Robert Clive was dated April 26: "Meer Jaffer, Roydoolob & Luteef Cawn [Mír Ja'fer, Ráidulábh, and Letíf Khán] are ready & willing to join our Forces, seize ye Nabob, and put up another Person approved of by Us. If You approve of this Scheme, Meer Jaffer requests You will write your Proposals: of what Money, what Land you want, or what Treaties you will engage in." [6] Watts's aide, Luke Scrafton, had written earlier: "Omychund is gone to Juggut-seit [Jagat Séth]. I know the Intent of his sending for him [Ámíchand]; it is to communicate to him his Desire that we should set up Luteef [Letíf Khán]." [7] Clive then received another message from Watts: "Omychund has, by my Desire, had a Meeting with Meer Coodayar Luteef Cawn, who has engaged that . . . he will join Us as soon as possible with his whole Force on Condition of our making him Nabob. . . . You must be sensible what great Honour will accrue to You from this Project, and how much Secrecy is necessary." [8]

Clive penned to Admiral Watson: "There is such Confusion & Discontent at Moorshedabad, from the Nabob's weak Conduct & Tyranny, that I have rec'd certain Advice of several Great Men (among whom are Juggut Seit & Meer Jaffer) being in League together to cut him off & set up Coodayar Luteef Cawn: a Man of great Family, Power & Riches, supported Tooth & Nail by Juggut Seith." [9]

He then communicated with Watts, anxious to learn more of this conspiracy and its kingpin before making any decisive moves:

> *If the Nabob is resolved to sacrifice us, we must avoid it by striking the first Blow. You should enquire if Luteef be a Man of Interest. Is he a Puttan [Pathan]? May not all be overset by the Affgans, if they come? Has Luteef any Interest there? You should consider the Honour of the Nation, and (if possible) avoid engaging us in any Executions. I hear Meer Jaffer wants to get rid of the Nabob. I hope it is true. . . . I hear the Plot thickens. . . . All is ready for Marching. Remember me to Omychund.*[10]

[6] *Orme Papers.*
[7] *Scrafton Letters* (April, 1757).
[8] *Orme Papers.*
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Ibid.*

Watts answered that Khudáyár Letíf was indeed an Afghan, and perhaps in cahoots with Ahmed Sháh—"which makes his Nomination to ye Nabobship extreamly risquey on our part, unless We have nought to fear from ye Affgans & much to gain from Ahmud Shaw." [11]

Clive, trusting neither Letíf Khán nor Ahmed Sháh, rejected his nomination and inquired about Mír Ja'fer. As the favorite son-in-law of the late lamented 'Alíverdí, perhaps he had the best interests of Bengal at heart. If the Hindu capitalists would support him, so would Clive.

Not trusting Ámíchand, Mír Ja'fer contacted Watts Sáhib and vowed to turn traitor if the English would appoint him Sirájuddawleh's successor. Watts, after instructions from Clive, agreed to honor this request, upon condition that Ja'fer made it worth their while monetarily. The demands startled him, but he swore by Allah to meet them. Two million and a half rupees were to go to Clive's army, the same amount to Watson's fleet, and six million to the King's and Company's officers. Clive's share of this pay-off would total some 2,080,000 rupees: the biggest loot since the days of Cortés and Pizarro.

What prompted Clive to propose such a treaty? Had he lost his sense of prudence and degenerated to what Marx called him, "that great robber"? Having suffered heavy financial losses in England and India, Clive feared for the future. But he was too proud to ask for more than he had already received. Not so Richard Clive. In his own interests, he persuaded several stockholders to petition the Company Court of Directors for a special grant of £6000 (as a token of appreciation for past services) which his son might invest in Bengal. The motion was refused on the excuse that Colonel Clive had ample opportunities for acquiring a fortune in the course of his services. Learning of this, Clive naturally took it as *carte blanche* to enrich himself. "I am now free of all Responsibility to them in this respect," he informed his father. "They have turn'd their Backs on me; and tho' I shall never treat them in kind, I owe them Nothing & shall take whenever I can with Honour." [12]

"Ye Nabob is very uppish," wrote Watts who continued to keep Clive informed of the moods and matters at Murshidabad. "Ye Three-

[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Clive Papers.*

fourths of his Army are his Enemies. When ye Agreement with Meer Jaffer is settled, We can not have a Man more powerfull; there is none equal to him." [13] Most certainly, Mír Ja'fer 'Alí Khán was held in special esteem by the people of Bengal, who had loved his father-in-law 'Alíverdí as much as they now hated nephew Sirájuddawleh. Though a military man, Ja'fer boasted some of the practical virtues of the late Neváb. He feared that to oppose the English was to oppose Destiny, for Clive was the acknowledged instrument of fate throughout India. And Clive appreciated that the British would never be popular in Bengal unless they identified with and aided a man acceptable to the people, as was Mír Ja'fer. Support of Sirájuddawleh had alienated them from the French. If France was on the side of the devils, England was on that of the angels. Angels of a devilish cast, "for one can not forget that it was this same Meer Jaffer who enslaved, mutilated & most vilely abused ye poor Drummer-boy Alex Campbell, to say nothing of others of our Children & Women-folk, held captive by his beastly Lust." [14]

Watts continued: "Juggut Seit, Roydoolob, Omychund & others (in short, all Degrees of Persons) are perswaded he [Sirájuddawleh] will break his Agreement & attack us whenever he can be assisted by ye French. Meer Jaffer says ye Nabob is generally disliked; that he ill-uses & affronts every body; that for his part, when ever he goes to visit him, he expects Assassination." [15] Clive responded to Watts on May 2: "Tell Meer Jaffer to fear nothing; that I will join him with 5000 Men who never turn'd their Backs; and that if he fails seizing the Nabob, we shall none the less be strong enough to drive him out of the Country. Assure him I will march Night & Day to his Assistance, and stand by him as long as I have a Man left." [16]

Receiving this assurance, Ja'fer pledged that no sooner was he proclaimed Neváb than he would destroy all French factories and forbid any French settlement from touching the soil of Bengal so long as he lived. This satisfied Clive, who saw in the old adventurer a perfect pawn.

Now that the conspiracy was plotted out, Watts implored Clive

[13] *Orme Papers.*
[14] *Ives Journal.*
[15] *Orme Papers.*
[16] *Ibid.*

to "keep an inviolable Secret & talk of nothing else but Merchandize. Amuse ye Nabob; appear to give up all Thought of War; send your People [troops] no where, and keep Quiet." [17] Messages were now to be written in cipher or with lemon juice, which required heating to make them visible. Clive responded: "To take away all Suspicion, I have wrote the Nabob a soothing Letter, agreeable to your Desire. [That "soothing Letter" said: "Your Highness should have no more suspicion or doubt of the truth of what I have often declared to you: that I desire nothing so much as to live in peace and friendship with you, and to make your kingdom flourish."] [18] Enter upon Business with Meer Jaffer as soon as you please." [19] To Watts's advisement, "*Ante Victoriam ne canas Triumphum*" (Do not celebrate the victory before you have won), Clive retorted tongue-in-cheek: "*Noli irritare Leones*" (Do not stir up lions).[20]

And now began, in earnest, one of the dirtiest intrigues ever devised by "men of honour," though it had an odor of tragic justice. It opened, innocently and honorably, with this note (May 5) from Clive to Watts: "Omychund, in Consideration of his Services, should have All his Losses [from the looting of Calcutta] made good by an express Article of the Treaty with Meer Jaffer." [21] Watts replied: "I have let Omychund into ye Scheme. I will conclude nothing without consulting him, and hope soon to have a Meeting with Meer Jaffer & finish every thing." [22] No mention, for or against, was made of Clive's generous suggestion. Watts distrusted and disliked the oily Brahman, and said nothing more to him than that a plot had been hatched to replace Sirájuddawleh with Mír Ja'fer. By disregarding Clive's proposal to reward Ámíchand for services rendered, Watts stirred up a hornet's nest that would sting to death.

Ámíchand, who had been kept in the dark about the money deal, was finally informed by one of his touts. Getting in touch with Mr. Watts, he demanded a share of the loot (two million rupees, to be exact) to keep his lips sealed as to what was going on right under Sirájuddawleh's nose. Were Clive confident that Ámíchand was

[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
[19] *Orme Papers.*
[20] *Watts Journal.*
[21] *Orme Papers.*
[22] *Ibid.*

bluffing, he would have called that bluff. But Clive was not so confident. Ámíchand was, after all, "the greatest villain on earth." It was deemed prudent to pacify him, and he was accordingly assured that he would get his share: every greasy anna of it.

Then the unexpected happened. Desperate for a discreet spy, Sirájuddawleh promised to reimburse all of Ámíchand's financial losses if he would betray his English masters. Ámíchand agreed to consider; and while considering, took the opportunity to raise his demands on the English. Watts informed Clive:

> *Omychund insisted on my demanding for him 5 per cent. on All ye Nabob's Treasure, which would amount to 2 Crore [20,000,000] of Rupees, besides a Quarter of All his [Sirájuddawleh's personal] Wealth. . . . To secure Roydoolob [Ráidulábh] to his Interest, he proposed giving him a Quarter Part of what-ever they could dupe Meer Jaffer out of. These Demands (in which his own Ambition, Cunning & avaricious Views were ye chief Motives) he positively insisted on, and would not be prevail'd upon to recede.*[23]

Clive agreed to give Ámíchand 5 per cent (twenty million) if he could secure the allegiance of Rájá Ráidulábh, who was still playing it safe by keeping silence. Watts opposed Clive's offer, fearful that Ámíchand (if encouraged) would attempt an even greater shakedown. "As I by no means think he merits such a Favour, or has acted so disinterested a Part as I once imagined, I have not mention'd ye 5 per cent. to him." [24]

When Ámíchand insisted that Watts get Mír Ja'fer to agree to his demand, Watts scribbled to Clive:

> *Omychund's Obstinacy will only ruin our Affairs; and should We give in to his Exactions, 'twill allarm ye Jealousy & lose ye good Opinion of all People. Meer Jaffer likewise having express'd an utter Distrust & Disgust at his [Ámíchand's] being any ways concern'd in ye Treaty, and as Delays are dangerous, I therefore had a Meeting with Meer Jaffer's Confidant [agent and aide, Mírzá 'Umer Bég], who says he is sure Jaffer will comply with ye Articles of Agreement you have sent up.*[25]

[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] *Ibid.*

Clive cautioned Watts not to force the fickle Brahman into betrayal: "Flatter Omychund greatly. Tell him the Admiral & Committee & Self are infinitely obliged to him for the Pains he has taken to aggrandize the Company's Affairs, and that his Name will be greater in England than ever it was in India. [A prophetic statement!] Give him no Room for Suspicion." [26] He received this disturbing reply:

> *Contrary to ye Wish of Meer Jaffer, but for Omychund's Eyes onely, I have inserted among ye proposed Articles of Agreement one for 2 Crore of Rupees to Omychund. We now have a Choice of Difficulties. If We do not honour Omychund's Demands in ye compleated Treaty, he must betray Us to ye Nabob. But if We allow Ourselves to be black-mail'd by Omychund, and comply with his Terms, Meer Jaffer must refuse to agree to ye Treaty & ye whole Enterprize abandon'd. What is your Advizement? I say We must somehow deceive Omychund.*[27]

Clive paced the floor of his headquarters. *We must somehow deceive Ámíchand.* How those words, that thought, haunted him! *Somehow . . . somehow . . . We must somehow deceive Ámíchand.* He hastened down to Calcutta, there to consult the consciences of "Hon'ble Gentlemen."

Clive and the Calcutta Council put their heads together; and it was recorded on May 17 that "As Omychund is a dangerous Man, and yet not likely to be of any Use to us, We have decided to deceive him by a Double Treaty." Regarding the genuine treaty: "The Article in favour of Omychund (the Committee think) should be totally left out, as his Behaviour rather merits Disgrace and Punishment at our Hands than such a Stipulation in his behalf." [28] Thus, two copies of the secret treaty with Mír Ja'fer were drawn up by Clive and the members of Council. The real one, on white paper, made no mention of Ámíchand. The false one, on pink paper, promised Ámíchand twenty million rupees. "If Omychund is capable of every villainy," Clive remarked, "is he to outstrip the English as well? If you want the end, you must want the means; and any means, in his case, is

[26] *Ibid.*
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Fort William MS. Records.*

justifiable. Gentlemen, we're playing for high stakes; and by God I've no intention of losing, whatever the cost." [29]

All the English authorities placed their signatures on the real treaty, and all but Admiral Watson signed the false one. He indignantly refused to be a party to such "villainous deceit," however much he detested Ámíchand.

When Watson left the conference room, Clive instructed one of the councilors (Henry Lushington) to forge Watson's signature on the pink paper.[30] *I will find a way, or make one. Necessity knows no law except to conquer.*

Warren Hastings later wrote that "There are Cases in Government in which it may be necessary to adopt Expedients which are not justified on such Principles as the Publick can be the Judges of." [31] And John Payne, then Chairman of the E.I.C. Directors, opined: "I know not whether such Double-dealing may square with the Politicks of Europe; but in Asia, nothing but Dissimulation will do." [32]

What Clive and Watts did in the East was befitting the East. But they failed to consider the guilty conscience of England, and that "O what a tangled web we weave, when first we practise to deceive!"

In a revolutionary age concerned over civil rights and the protection of the individual, in reaction to epochs of injustice, forgery was held as much a moral crime as a violation of common law. The forger forfeited honor as an English gentleman, and could claim no more respect than a poacher or a sheep-stealer. But these were the ethics of Europe. Clive, unlike Watson, saw no "villainy" in wielding the amorality of India as a weapon against its own miscreants.

Macaulay deduced that "Clive was not a man to do anything by halves. We almost blush to write it. He forged Admiral Watson's name." [33] Others are not in accord. Even those who question his scruples do not accuse him of forgery, though he was certainly an accessory before the fact. The principal is said to be Henry Lushington, a young survivor of the Black Hole and sufferer from "Moorish" prepuciophobia and homophilia, who had every reason to desire the

[29] *Ives Journal.*
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] *Hastings Papers.*
[32] *Orme Papers.*
[33] Macaulay (Thomas Babington), Lord: *Essays* (Clive).

return of evil for evil. According to Captain Brereton of H.M.S. *Kent*, Admiral Watson refused to sign the pink treaty because such an act was "dishonorable to him as an officer and an affront to propose it to him. It was then proposed somebody should sign it for him, which he also refused and said he would wash his hands of it. He would have nothing to do with it; he was a stranger to deception; they might do as they pleased." Brereton then added, in reference to the day Watson died: "The Admiral said he always thought the transaction dishonorable; and as there was so much iniquity among mankind, he did not wish to stay any longer among them." [34]

But John Cooke, secretary to the Calcutta Council, asserted that "The Admiral knew his name was to it [the false treaty]; and 'twas my understanding, from what dropped from him, that he had secretly permitted his name to be used. By God, in conversation with me, he certainly didn't express any resentment or surprise that his name was put to it. He just shrugged up his shoulders and said laughingly that he hadn't signed it, but that he had left it to them to do as they pleased." Cooke concluded significantly: "He knew the motives for which such a fictitious treaty was made; and though he would not sign it, he had no objection to Omychund being lulled into a security and preventing the whole design being discovered and defeated." [35] Watson's personal physician, Edward Ives, aptly opined that "A strict Principle of Dellicacy, which in him was superior to any Point of Policy, operated too strongly on his Mind to permit him to join even in a necessary Deception of this Nature; yet he manifested no Displeasure against ye Actors." Indeed, "All Classes of People, from their Knowledge of Omychund's Avarice & Treachery, applauded ye Artifice by which he was so deservedly out-witted."

On May 18, the day after it was decided in Council to deceive Ámíchand, Colonel Clive acquainted Mr. Watts with the master plan, noting the necessity "to form a Double Treaty (both to be sign'd by Meer Jaffer & by us) in one of which the Article in favour of Omychund is to be inserted, in the other to be left out." [36] Watts responded at once: "For God's Sake, make Haste. You are very sensible how extreamly dangerous ye least Delay may be. Omychund

[34] *Reports from the Secret Committee on the State of East India Company.*
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Orme Papers.*

threatens to betray Us to ye Nabob, and will have us All murther'd in a Trice." [37]

Indeed, agent Francis Sykes (stationed at Cossimbazar) noted in his journal:

> *Being on a Visit to Mr. Watts [at Murshidabad], I found him under great Anxiety. He took me aside; told me Ommychund had been threatening to betray us to Serajah Dowlah, and would have us all murder'd, unless he [Watts] would give some Assurances that the Sum promised him should be made good. Watts says he is under the greatest Anxiety how to counter-act the Design of Ommychund, whose Conduct is allways suspected & who has Spies upon Mr. Watts's Conduct. Nothing is reduced to Paper without fear of Exposure.*

Just how "secret" was the Great Conspiracy? According to Jean Law, "Never was a conspiracy conducted so openly, so publicly, and with equal indiscretion on the parts of the English and Indians. It was common talk in all the bazaars; and what is so incredibly surprising is that, while every place echoed with the noise of it, the Nevâb, who had a vast network of spies, was ignorant of everything." A commentary on Sirájuddawleh's unpopularity and blindness! Law goes on to declare that "The whole royal court was bought over, the chief army officers engaged not to allow their soldiers to fight, and even the eunuchs of the harem favored revolution. The cause of the English was also that of the Hindu capitalists, and mutual interest made them act in concert. What effect could not be expected from all these forces united and motivated by a man so skillful as Mr. Watts?"

Clive sent the treaties to Watts for his and Ja'fer's signatures, with implicit instructions that Ámíchand was to see and sign only the false one, which would then be destroyed. "Promise all that the Wretch asks," he had written, "and draw up any Form of Agreement which will satisfy him & make us secure against his Treachery. Remember, that in dealing with Scoundrels like him, the End justifys the Means." [38] Now, with the die cast, he wrote:

[37] *Ibid.*
[38] *Ibid.*

> *Both the Civilian & Military Gentlemen agreed that Omychund is the greatest Villain upon Earth, and that now he appears in the strongest Light what he was always suspected to be: a Villain in grain. However, to counter-plot this Scoundrel, and at the same Time give him no Room to suspect our Intentions, enclosed you will receive two Forms of Agreement: the one Real, and to be strictly kept up by us; the other Fictitious. In short, this Affair once concluded Omychund will be treated as he deserves. This you will acquaint Meer Jaffer with.*[39]

Clive, like Dupleix, could now boast: "I'm a master of old tricks and a maker of new!" [40]

June 4, 1757. William Watts, disguised as a veiled Muslim woman, was smuggled into Mír Ja'fer's harem in a curtained palanquin. There the alliance was signed and sworn to on genitals, Bible, and Qurán. Leaving the way he entered, Watts hastened to Calcutta before the storm broke over his head.

Ámíchand, playing it safe as usual, hinted to Sirájuddawleh that Ja'fer and Clive *might* be in collusion. He had secretly signed the pink treaty, but was taking no chances. "I have a great secret to tell you," he said. "If it were known, my life would be in danger. If it be true, so is yours. O Excellency, you cannot trust Mír Ja'fer." [41] The Neváb expressed disbelief, yet his suspicions were aroused. Having rewarded the doubledealer with 400,000 rupees, he therefore called upon his uncle to swear an oath of allegiance on his sexual organs and the Holy Qurán—which Ja'fer did, as though it was a random act of urinating, much to his nephew's satisfaction and relief. In Scrafton's words, "They parted with Smiles on their Countenances & Treachery in their Hearts, each happy in the Thought of over-reaching the other." [42] Denied his betrayal reward, Ámíchand was dismissed from the palace as a troublemaker. He too scurried for safety to Calcutta.

Though Ámíchand had cast temporary doubt upon Ja'fer in Sirájuddawleh's mind, he was shrewd enough not to reveal the conspiracy. In Orme's words: "Grounded on his Importance, by knowing the Secret, he held out the Terror of betraying it to secure his own Ad-

[39] *Ibid.*
[40] *Ives Journal.*
[41] Husayn Khán; Kerem 'Alí.
[42] *Scrafton Letters.*

vantages. Whether he would have betray'd it, if refused [a share of Ja'fer's pledged reward], is uncertain; for Part of his Fortune was in the Power of the English, and he had the utmost Vengeance of Jaffer and his Confederates to fear." [43]

On his flight to Calcutta, the oily Brahman stopped off at Plassey for a private interview with Rájá Ráidulábh. No one knows what the two influential Hindus said to each other, but it's a fair guess that Ámíchand divulged everything to a man whom the English still could not trust: a man who had, by his silence, resolved to stand neutral. When Ráidulábh suddenly returned to the capital, Watts scribbled to Clive:

> *Roydoolob went, not to ye Nabob (thank God!), but direct to Meer Jaffer & objected to ye enormous pecuniary Demands of ye English, saying there was but a small Sum in ye Treasury. Hence, Roydoolob hath committed himself to Us—but for a Price. He proposes, as a Compromize, giving us Half of what might come into his & Meer Jaffer's Possession after ye Nabob's Death. This Proposal is much ye same as what was made Us some Time ago by Omychund; therefore, if you'll strictly examine him, I imagine You will find it a concerted Scheme between him & Roydoolob. If You think you are strong enough, I am of ye Opinion We had better depend on Ourselves & enter into no further Contract or have any more Connexion with such a Set of shuffling, lying, spiritless Wretches.*[44]

Having read this, Clive scrawled in a fit of anger: "You have allow'd yourself to be duped!" [45] He then notified Watson: "I will not embark in any Undertaking with such a Set of cowardly Rascals!" [46]

But another day brought reassurance to Clive. By the admonitory wheedling of Mr. Watts, "Roydoolob hath chose to stand to ye Old Agreement with Meer Jaffer, and hath given me ye strictest Assurances of his Fidellity to ye Treaty & that there is nought of Foul Play between him & Omychund." [47]

[43] *Military Transactions.*
[44] *Orme Papers.*
[45] *Watts Journal* (insert).
[46] *Orme Papers.*
[47] *Ibid.*

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* 28 *

ON THE EVE

Sirájuddawleh served notice on Clive:

> *Word has just reached me that Mr. Watts fled in the night from this city [Murshidabad], apparently with a very deceitful design and an intention to break the treaty; for Allah knows, without your orders, Mr. Watts would never have acted in this alarming manner. That he has done so is a justification of my not having withdrawn the army from Plassey, for I suspected some trick was soon to be played. I thank Allah, however, that the treaty has not been broken on my part; and as it was so solemnly sworn to before Allah and His Prophet, He will doubtless punish him who first violates it.*[1]

Prophetic words. For it was Sirájuddawleh, not the English, who had first violated the Treaty of Calcutta by his intrigues with the French. Now that treaty was nullified by a new one, with a man who promised that John Company should have no rivals.

On June 11, 1757, the signed and sealed pact with Mír Ja'fer was delivered to the Calcutta Council. Clive penned to Watson: "As every thing is concluded, I propose beginning our March early on Monday Morning [the thirteenth]." [2] The Admiral replied: "I hope every thing will turn out in the Expedition to your Wishes, and that I may soon have to congratulate you on the Success of it. I most heartily pray for your Health & a speedy Return crown'd with Laurells." [3]

Through lashing rains of a daily worsening monsoon, Robert Clive marched steadily northward with a handful of men to challenge the Neváb Sirájuddawleh legions. It was to be the greatest gamble of his

[1] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
[2] *Orme Papers.*
[3] *Ibid.*

life. Success perchance hung on the tenuous strand of Mír Ja'fer 'Alí Khán's treachery, and on the favorable maneuvering of Rájá Ráidulábh Rám and Mír Khudáyár Letíf Khán. If these men could be trusted to turn the trick, the Neváb's fate was already sealed. But if not, it would be a struggle to the death.

Clive's expedition numbered about a thousand Europeans and about a hundred Eurasians, all under Major Eyre Coote, twenty-one hundred Indians under Major James Kilpatrick, and ten light field-pieces directed by Captain William Jennings. The twenty-one hundred sepoys were Deccani veterans and Bengali recruits. Eight 6-pounders and two small howitzers was the weight of ordnance.

With this meager force Clive was marching against a horde of nearly a hundred thousand Hindustanis strongly entrenched at Plassey. He had no cavalry, whereas the Neváb boasted some twenty thousand horsemen under Mír Madan 'Alí Khán. Ráidulábh commanded some fifty thousand infantry and ten thousand armed camp followers or irregulars; and the Neváb's artillery, directed by Capitaine de Saint-Frais (Sinfray) and manned chiefly by fifty Frenchmen, amounted to fifty-three guns of heavy caliber: 18-, 24-, and 32-pounders. Almost thirty to one! But Clive remembered Arcot, and *Deperdit numerus:* There's ruin in numbers.

Reaching Chandernagore, Clive sent an abusive letter to Sirájuddawleh, reproaching him for his duplicity and breaches of faith, then exhorting him to choose between submission to Company demands or instant destruction. The Neváb laughed outwardly, quoting a Persian version of Horace's mountain-and-mouse allegory, but inwardly he was haunted by fear. He had heard of Arcot.[4]

The first twinge of anxiety, aye, even of uncertainty and suspicion, struck Clive on June 16, when he was handed the following message from Mír Ja'fer: "On the news of your coming, the Neváb was much intimidated and requested that I should stand as his friend. Agreeable to the circumstances of the moment, I thought it advisable to acquiesce with his request; but what we have agreed upon must still be done. Allah willing, I shall arrive." [5] Clive was now apprehensive that the Beast of Bengal had terrorized his uncle, whom he had recalled to Murshidabad from Plassey, into an imprisonment of

[4] Husayn Khán; Kerem 'Alí.
[5] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

loyalty sanctified by the Qurán and a mutual touching of genitalia.

He therefore dashed off a note, in Persian, urging Ja'fer to "Write me what you intend to do and what is proper for me to do. On mutual intelligence depends the success of our affairs, so write me daily and fully. Your last letter gave me the utmost satisfaction, after the great pain I have suffered by your silence. My movements will, in a great measure, depend upon the advices I receive from you. If I meet the Nevâb's army, what part will you play; and how am I to act? This you may be assured of, that I will attack the Nevâb within twenty-four hours after I come in sight of his army. Of all things," he added, "take care of yourself that you be not undone by treachery before my arrival at Plassey." [6] Clive did not fancy being led into a trap. Before he could devise a decisive plan of action, he needed to be absolutely certain of Ja'fer's fidelity; for it was Ja'fer alone, the idol of his army, who could turn the tables by force of influence.

Three days later, Clive received another brief message from Ja'fer. It contained merely the vague intelligence that he would soon leave the capital, and an apology for not being more explicit, because spies were stationed on all the roads to intercept messages. This one, a tightly rolled (and unsigned) slip of paper, was concealed in the pubic hair of a Hindu holyman whom Sirájuddawleh had forcibly circumcised.[7]

Clive replied at once:

> *It gives me great concern that, in an affair of such consequence to yourself in particular, you do not exert yourself more. So long as I have been on my march, you have not yet given me the least information what measures it is necessary for me to take; nor do I know what is going on at Murshidabad. Surely it is in your power to send me news daily. It must be more difficult for me to procure trusty messengers than you. However, I shall wait here till I have proper encouragement to proceed. I think it absolutely necessary that you should join my army as soon as possible. Consider that the Nevâb will increase in strength daily. Come over to me at Plassey, or any other place you judge proper, with what force you have. Even a thousand horse will be sufficient. I prefer conquering by open force.*[8]

[6] *Ibid.*
[7] Kerem 'Alí.
[8] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

He then wrote to the Calcutta Council:

> *I feel the greatest Anxiety at the little Intelligence I receive from Meer Jaffer; and if he is not treacherous, his* Sang-froyd or *Want of Strength will, I fear, overset the Expedition. I am trying a last Effort . . . to prevail upon him to march out & join us. I have appointed Plassey as the Place of* Rendez-vous, *and have told him at the same time that without he gives me this or some other sufficient Proof of the Sincerity of his Intentions, I will not cross the River. This, I hope, will meet with your Approbation. I shall act with such Caution as not to risque the Loss of our Forces; and while we have them, we may always have it in our Power to bring about a Revolution. . . . I desire you will give your Sentiments freely how you think I should act if Meer Jaffer can give us no Assistance.*[9]

An answer soon arrived (June 20) from Mír Ja'fer, who was about to leave Murshidabad with his nephew. It was hidden in a Hindu boy's long tight foreskin, and it was almost as vague as the last: "Tomorrow, by the blessing of Allah, I shall march. I shall have my tent fixed to the right or left of the army. I have hitherto been afraid to send you intelligence. After I have reached the army, mutual intelligence will be easier; but here the Nevâb has placed guards on all the roads. Your letters come too openly to me. I hope that till our affairs are publicly declared, you will be very careful." [10] Mír Ja'fer was in fear of his life, for Sirájuddawleh watched him like a hawk. Acting upon Ja'fer's advice to be "very careful," for "Your letters come too openly to me," Clive sent this brief reply cached between the messenger-boy's buttocks: "I await your arrival with great expectation. Caution is expedient, but overcaution is inexpedient; for he who hesitates is lost. I am not called the Daring in War for an excess of caution." [11]

Not far from the village (Cutva) where Clive was encamped lay the Bhagirathi River, now in flood, and close beyond it the target: *Plassey*. Had Clive been certain of Mír Ja'fer's intentions, he would not have hesitated. For the first time in his life he hung back, apprehensive of taking that hard step forward. The fate of John Company

9 *Fort William MS. Records.*
10 Kerem 'Alí; *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
11 *Ibid.*

rested on his shoulders. Were he to advance and be smashed, English interests would be doomed in Bengal—and perhaps in all of India. But what gain in vacillation, or even retreat? Show of weakness would mean loss of prestige, and loss of prestige would mean loss of power, and loss of power would mean certain death; for without these "virtues," *Ján Kampení* could claim no friends among the powerful and prestigious native princes.

Morning, June 21. Clive called a council of war. He was unusually grim, nervous. He began:

> *Gentlemen, I've summoned you here to ascertain your honest opinion as to whether in our present situation, without assistance and on our own bottom, it would be prudent to cross the river at once and attack the Nabob at all risks; or whether, availing ourselves of the large supplies of grain, we should maintain this position during the rains and await the invited but uncertain support of some other country power. I fear we cannot depend upon Meer Jaffer or any of the others. At best, he may stand neuter in the event of action. At worst, 'tis rumored the whole affair has been discovered and that Jaffer and the Nabob are as one. 'Tis also reported that Mr. Law and a small body of French are within three days' march of joining the Nabob, whose army—by the best intelligence—is at least fifty thousand strong. Well, how say you, gentlemen?*

Major Coote responded first:

> *Having met with nothing but success, our men are in great spirits. I'm of opinion that any delay might cast a dampness. Besides, the arrival of Law—and perhaps even Bussy—will only strengthen the Nabob. And our distance from Calcutta is so great that all communication from thence must be entirely cut off by the French, thus reducing us to the greatest distress. For these reasons, gentlemen, I say we should come to an immediate action; or if that is thought entirely impracticable, we should return to Calcutta: the consequence of which must be our own disgrace and the inevitable destruction of the Company's affairs.*

Major Kilpatrick shook his head. "I say wait: at least till we hear from some other country power, or are sure of Meer Jaffer's support."

Captain Jennings agreed, but added: "If we determine not to fight, we should fall back upon Calcutta." [12]

Clive now instructed his adjutant to draw up a ballot sheet: "At a Council of War held at Cutva, June 21st, 1757, the following Question was proposed by Col. Clive: Whether in our present Situation, without Assistance & on our own Bottom, it would be prudent to attack the Nabob; or whether we should wait till join'd by some Country Power." [13] Seven officers, led by Major Coote, voted for immediate action; while ten officers, led by Major Kilpatrick, voted for tentative delay. The verdict now rested with Colonel Clive.

After all the officers had left the headquarters hut, Clive strolled away to a mango grove and sat down by himself. For nearly an hour he brooded, deliberated, planned. Seven *for*, ten *against*. Dare he disregard, overrule, the majority? James Wolfe, another great warrior, said that "Next to valor, the best qualities in a military man are vigilance and caution." Clive recalled the words in Watson's latest letter: "I do not think your Letters carry the most promising Appearance of Success. You can not therefore be too cautious to prevent a false Step being taken, which might be of very fatal Consequence to our Affairs." [14] But was not Success the child of Audacity? And if discretion be the better part of valor, why did fortune favor the bold?

Be bolde, be bolde, and every where Be bolde. . . . Be not too bolde.

Then Clive penciled these lines to "My Dearest Peggy":

> *If Optimism is the Madness of maintaining that every thing is right when it is wrong, then I am madly optimistick. . . .*
>
> *Bid me despair, and I'll despair*
> *Under this Mangoe-tree;*
> *Or bid me die, and I will dare*
> *E'en Death to die for thee.*
>
> *We go forward into Battle, perhazard the greatest Battle of our Lives, to determine the Destiny of a great Empire. We go to win, to conquer. . . .* [15]

[12] *Journal of the Expedition to Bengall.*
[13] *Ibid.; Orme Papers.*
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Maskelyne Papers* (Clive quotes Voltaire *re l'optimisme*).

With that missive in his hands, Clive strode back to camp. Meeting Major Coote and Captain Jennings, he told them: "I have decided to go on. We shall cross the river tomorrow morning."

Moments later he informed Major Kilpatrick: "I'm determined to put all to the issue of the sword. We'll cross the river at daybreak and advance direct upon Plassey."[16] Clive then announced his general orders to all officers: "Notwithstanding the Resolution of the Council of War, the Colonel Commanding is determined to march Tomorrow Morning, June 22nd. Accordingly, the Army will hold themselves in Readiness."[17]

For the rest of that day and throughout the evening, the entire bivouac was astir with excitement and anticipation—and preparation for the coming great battle. His mind settled, resolved, Clive slept soundly—at last.

Sunrise, June 22. Over a thousand red-coated and blue-jacketed Europeans in buff breeches and black leggings and cocked hats, and over two thousand red-tunicked Indians in white loincloths and multicolored turbans, marched down to the right bank of the Bhagirathi and began crossing in boats and on rafts, against the flood current. The crossing was not completed till four in the afternoon.

Halting momentarily in a small temple, where he instructed his officers in the plan of action, Clive received another message from Mír Ja'fer. It was brought by one of his concubines, who had concealed it between the lips of her vulva, and it read:

> *The Nevâb has halted at Muncarra [a hamlet north of Plassey] and intends to entrench himself there. The sooner you march to attack him the better. You are now only designing, I know; but it is not wise to be hesitant. When you come near, I shall then be able to join you. I suggest that you should undertake a circuitous march and attack him in the rear. When I have arrived near the army, I will secretly send you all intelligence. Let me have previous notice of the time you intend to fight.*[18]

"A flank movement is out of the question," Clive said. " 'Twould expose us to being cut off from our communications. Besides, I'm

[16] Coote, Eyre: *Journal; Journal of the Expedition to Bengall.*
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *Tárikh-i-Mansúrí.*

still rather doubtful of Jaffer's good faith. No, gentlemen, we shall march straight forward. I'm determined to meet the enemy head-on." [19] He then turned to the concubine and said: "*Apná khávind batáo ham fawran áté hayn.*" (Tell your master we are coming at once.) She nodded, and concealed a message, "*apní chútí mén*" (in your cunt), as Clive indicated.[20]

To Mír Ja'fer 'Alí Khán Behádur:

I am determined to risk everything on your account, though you will not exert yourself. I have crossed the river, and will march to meet you. Join me at Plassey. Remember how much your own glory and safety depend upon the Neváb's army obeying your orders. If they do, you will be governor of these provinces. If they do not, I call Allah to witness that the fault is not mine. What happens then will be left to chance. What more can I say than that I am as desirous of your success and welfare as I am of my own?

Sábit Jang Behádur [21]

Before receiving a reply, Clive wrote to the Calcutta Council at six P.M.:

I have over-ruled the Sentiments of the Council of War held Yesterday, whether or not it was proper (without the Assistance of some Country Power) to attack the Nabob. I waited only for some Encouragement from Meer Jaffer to proceed, which must be the Issue unless the Nabob makes very fair Offers of Accommodation. I was really at a Loss how to act at the present Situation of our Affairs, especially had I received a Confirmation by Letter of Meer Jaffer's [rumored] *Resolution to stand neuter. The Nabob's Forces, at present, are not said to exceed 80,000 Men. If we attack them, it must be without any Assistance. In this place, a Repulse must be fatal; on the contrary, Success may give the greatest Advantage. The Nabob's Apprehensions are great, and perhaps he may be glad to grant us an honourable Peace. The Principle of Fear may make him act much against his private Inclination, and I believe That has been the Case ever since the Capture of Chandernagore.*[22]

[19] *Journal of the Expedition to Bengall.*
[20] Kerem 'Alí.
[21] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
[22] *Fort William MS. Records.*

Clive forwarded another note to Ja'fer: "I have come to a resolution of marching immediately to Plassey. I am impatient for an answer to my last message." [23] He then sent a final ultimatum to Sirájuddawleh:

> *It is the sentiment of all who have charge of the Company's affairs that we should put our disputes to arbitration before Jagat Séth, Mír Ja'fer Khán, Rájá Ráidulábh, Khudáyár Letíf, and the rest of your great men; and if it shall appear that I have deviated from the treaty, I must give up all my demands; but that if it should appear Your Excellency has deviated from the treaty, we must demand satisfaction for all our losses and for all the expenses of the army and navy. If you will place confidence in me, and agree to this fair means of settlement, no harm shall come from my immediate approach. I tell you this as a friend. Act as you please; it is all the same to me. I will wage war with you as readily as I will make peace. And remember: Victory depends not on numbers, but on the will of Allah. Might will avail you nothing, for Right is on our side.*[24]

The Neváb ripped the letter to pieces. Did the infidel think that the Neváb would allow underlings to pass judgment upon his behavior? The English cried out to him for their own destruction, which he would bring upon them with all the might of Bengal.

It was a toilsome fifteen-mile march, up the left bank of the flooded river. The work of towing heavy-laden supply barges against the roaring current was exhausting. Transport bullocks were at a premium, thanks to the Neváb's cattle thieves; but those in use on the trail upcountry were now bogged down at Cutva. Where the stream had overflowed its banks, the troops struggled through water up to their waists and in mud that sucked off their boots. It was not until one o'clock in the morning of June 23, 1757, that Clive's worn-out army reached Plassey and bivouacked in a large mango grove (the *Lákshabágh* or Garden of a Hundred Thousand Trees) a short distance beyond. The grove, surrounded by an irrigation ditch, stood in a bend of the river. About fifty yards north of it, on the high bank of the Bhagirathi, stood the Neváb's red-brick hunting lodge enclosed by a

[23] Kerem 'Alí.
[24] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

masonry-walled garden. Its Indian name: *Dilkhusheh-Kháneh* (House of Heart's Delight). The English called it "Plassey House." Clive made it his headquarters. The Neváb's vast encampment lay but a mile away, aglow with myriad fires flickering in the sultry drizzle.

As of old, anxiety drove Clive to sexual excess. According to an anonymous chronicler in the *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí,* his servant-boy (Murád) claims to have seen him in the act of masturbation (*mushtzení,* "beating a fistful"); that his master solicited him to perform fellatio (*luqmeh girándish,* "take a mouthful"); and that Clive then, in a fit of frustration, called for a camp whore (*qehbet-i-urdú*) whom he swived to an exhaustion that finally brought him sleep.

"Murád asserted that he often obliged his master when there were no women handy, and that, when riding alone in his palanquin, Clive would masturbate (*jalq míkerd*); and that with his mistresses, of whom there were many, he was like Maymún [a Negro adventurer who, according to Irani folklore, could copulate continuously without ejaculating. *Maymún* literally means "ape," symbol of lust]." Murád, apparently, never saw Clive satisfied—and attributed this to a godlike or demonic supersexuality. If these "scandals" are to be believed—and the evidence of Dr. Rae, for one, would tend to validate them—it appears that Clive was a compulsive "onanist" who could respond to all manner of genital stimulation, owing to his "polymorphous-perverse" or "sexually infantile" nature, but whose greatest psychophysiological satisfaction was centered in autoerotism. This neurosis was doubtless provoked in great measure by the irritating phimosis of his prepubertal years, and then aggravated to an almost psychotic extreme by circumcision, which must have aroused any number of masochistic anxieties (the so-called "castration complex") as well as the normal physical reaction of hypersensitivity, resulting in persistent erections caused by chance friction of the tender glans.

Regarding the masochistic impulses and anxieties occasioned by phimosis and circumcision, Clive's manic-depressive disposition, in which depression alternated with euphoria, was therefore both the cause and effect of his satyriasis. In Rae's words:

> *Mr. C. hath inherited a black Idiocrasis which pre-disposes him to Excesses. It was assumed that ye Removal of that offending Skin would remove also ye enervating & unmanly Habit of Self-pollution,*

to which he seem'd more by Circumstance than by Nature so much given; but it would appear ye Sensation in his Corona was so intense as to make Venery painfull, and had oblidged him to use his Hand as before, so as not to touch ye tender Nut [glans]; and tho' now ye excessive Sensation be much diminisht by Exposure & Callousing, he will not (can not?) cease his Satyrique Inordinacies, which allow him no Rest & are driving him to Madness.

Elsewhere in his journal, Rae notes: "Ye Degree of C.'s Addiction to Manual Abuse may be deduced from what he hath scriven in ye Volume *Onania*, which I lent him for his own Reform; *viz.*, 'Sweet art thou, O Sollitary Vice! For one good Shake I'd pay thy fatal Price!' " (The work mentioned by Rae was first published in 1752, going through numerous editions and printings in years thereafter, and was as famous and influential as Tissot's *L'Onanisme*. Its tempting title: *Onania; or, The Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution, and All its Frightfull Consequences (in Both Sexes) Considered: with Spiritual and Physical Advice to Those who have Already Injured Themselves by this Abominable Practice.*)

Nevâb Sirájuddawleh spent a no less restless night. This fuzzy-bearded, fierce-eyed youth sat moodily in his tent, perhaps haunted by the specters of those who had cursed him with their last breath in the Black Hole of Calcutta. His twisted mind was further wrenched by wild fears and delusions of persecution. Dreading everyone who approached him, yet dreading to be left alone, he lived a nightmare; and his only distraction, restoring his fantasy of grandeur, was provided not by Bégam Lutfunnisá or his dozen harem beauties (whom he suspected of plotting to poison him) but by his young and handsome (and circumcised) Hindu favorite, Shrí Mohanlál, with whom he entered a fool's paradise of hashish and homosexual pleasure.[25]

[25] Kerem 'Alí.

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THE BATTLE OF PLASSEY

Daybreak, June 23, 1757. Lieutenant Colonel Robert Clive, standing on the flat roof of the Nevâb's hunting lodge, adjusted his telescope to scan the reddening horizon. He tingled with anxiety. This day, and this battle, was to decide the fate of India for nearly two hundred years.

Positioned as they were in a bend of the river, Clive's handful was almost surrounded by the horde of Sirájuddawleh. The enemy occupied a strongly entrenched camp which swept from north to south in a three-mile arc. The right flank, held by Mír Madan 'Alí, rested on the upper curve of the Bhagirathi; and the left, commanded by Mír Ja'fer, stretched almost to Plassey and the lower turning of the stream. The central divisions of Ráidulábh Rám and Khudáyár Letíf swung out into the open plain, forming a vast semicircle around the mango grove. Fieldworks, mounted with guns, fronted each division; and the French battery of Captain de Saint-Frais, planted in a redoubt on the right flank, was within a thousand-yard range of Clive's position.

Soon after daylight, trumpets blared and drums crashed as the Nevâb's forces moved out of their entrenchments and deployed for battle. Clive gazed anxiously to the far right, wondering if Mír Ja'fer had dared to sow the seeds of mutiny among his faithful warriors. With a raging river behind him, Clive was between the hammer and the anvil.

"My God, what a horde!" said Major Kilpatrick. "Should they all come at us at once, what must be the event?"

Clive replied pensively: "We must make the best fight we can during the day, and at night sling our muskets over our shoulders and march back to Calcutta."[1] He recalled what Watts had written twenty days ago: "We can expect no more Assistance than that they [the native conspirators] will stand Neuter & wait ye Event of a

[1] *Journal of the Expedition to Bengall.*

Battle. If We are successfull, they will reap ye Benefit of it; if otherwise, they continue as they were, without appearing to have been concern'd with Us." [2]

It was seven A.M. Clive scrawled a note to Mír Ja'fer: "Whatever could be done by me I have done. I can do no more. If you will not come, I will not march to meet you. If you will not even write, to inform me of your intentions, I will understand that you have made up with the Neváb. In that event, I will perhaps make up with him also." [3] There came no reply.

Quitting headquarters for the moment, Clive personally led his army out of the grove and into the ditches. The three European regiments, with six guns posted between them, were flanked in firing-line formation by the divided sepoy brigade. The remaining four field-pieces were placed in battery alongside the hunting lodge, protected by a brick kiln, facing the French redoubt. "Keep steady, gentlemen!" the chief said, inspecting his troops. "Neither advance nor retire without command, and fire only when ordered."

"What, Colonel Sáhib, if they should all be true to their colors?" a native officer called in Hindustani, pointing across the plain.

"*Kuch na'ín!*" Clive replied. *It is all the same!* [4] He then returned to his observation post on the roof, where he watched and waited with heart pounding.

Eight A.M. As Clive peered through his telescope, he saw the intensifying rays of the sun dance on the glittering columns of enemy warriors. They were arrayed in multicolored costumes and above them fluttered a thousand battle flags of green and white, black and gold, inscribed with Quranic verses and slogans of *jihád* (holy war). The fifty thousand infantry of Sirájuddawleh, armed with matchlocks, bows and arrows, spears, swords, and hand grenades, made a colorful spectacle. His twenty thousand cavalry, bristling with sleek scimitars and tasseled lances and brass-orbed shields and garbed in quilted cuirasses and steel-embossed leather helmets, made an even grander show. There were also javelin-throwing cameleers, whose gaily adorned dromedaries were mounted with *jingals* or light swivel

[2] *Orme Papers.*

[3] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

[4] *Journal of the Expedition to Bengall* (Anglo-Indian orthography: *Cooch naeen*).

guns; and elegantly howdah'd elephants, in scarlet-and-gold trappings, carried archers and 2-pounders. Drawn by white bullocks, and pushed by elephants, the enemy guns rolled forward on huge wooden emplacements crowded with cannoneers and loaded with ammunition.

Boom! A shot from Saint-Frais' battery signaled the opening of battle. Seconds later, fifty-two bursts billowed and thundered across the three-mile front and an iron blast ripped through the mango grove. Clive's ten little guns promptly responded, and thus began an artillery duel that was the hottest and heaviest he had ever known. The Nevâb's gunners were poorly trained; their shots whistled high over the heads of Clive's troops crouching in the ditch. Only the four efficiently handled French pieces plowed up the embankment, deluging Clive's men with dirt. But Clive's gunners played on Sirájuddawleh's emplacements with deadly effect. One by one, platforms were smashed and cannonry dismantled. Native artillerists fell like flies; oxen dropped in their traces; elephants bolted away trumpeting. By ten o'clock, all but Saint-Frais' battery were silenced.

Clive surveyed his multitudinous foe. Not a stir in that far-flung crescent of nearly a hundred thousand Hindustanis. Watts was undoubtedly right: "We can expect no more Assistance than that they will stand Neuter & wait ye Event of a Battle."

Eleven A.M. Colonel Clive called a council of war in the shell-riddled hunting lodge. Majors Coote and Kilpatrick, and Captain Jennings and the others, listened to these words from their restless chief:

> *The enemy show no sign of further movement. We can only assume by this that either the Nabob means to lure us into the open or his men refuse to fight. Perhaps Jaffer and his cronies have swayed them in our favor. To be certain of this, we must play a waiting game as well. 'Twould be sheer madness to risk an attack, as we should all be swallowed up if the scheme is to draw us out. I'm therefore determined that unless any unexpected circumstances occur, we shall hold our present position till nightfall and then launch a surprise assault on the French battery and the Nabob's right. Once in possession of the redoubt, we must find ourselves so disposed as to drive 'em all off the field.*[5]

[5] *Ibid.*

Clive knew, from past experience, that a sudden and violent attack in the dead of night must throw an enemy lacking drill and discipline into confusion. Besides, without artillery, the Nevàb was crippled. Such a *coup* seemed to be his only immediate hope of success. But the day was far from over.

Just before noon, dark clouds piled up on the hazy horizon and then discharged an hour-long torrent of rain. Clive's artillerists instantly covered their guns and ammunition with tarpaulins. The French *artilleurs* were not so provident. Their powder was soaked, their battery disabled.

Capitaine de Saint-Frais, assuming that Clive's ordnance was also temporarily out of action, passed the word to Mír Madan 'Alí Khán. Commanding the right flank with his mighty cavalry division, Madan 'Alí was decidedly Sirájuddawleh's most trusted officer, and the Nevàb had ordered his royal tent to be pitched behind none other.

Clive peered through his telescope to see prostitutes and dancing-girls, some stark naked save for garlands of flowers, flitting among the Indian horsemen.[6] He understood that the women were firing them to fighting frenzy.

Trumpets sounded; a dashing cavalry officer spurred forward, waving his saber. It was Mír Madan 'Alí, leading his mounted division. Clive watched with breathless apprehension as twenty thousand enemy troopers charged across the plain at full gallop, a sea of death pouring upon the little island of redcoats.

Clive was ready. When the enemy came within three hundred yards of the ditch, a thousand muskets flashed fire and ten fieldpieces erupted grapeshot and canister. Horsemen by the hundreds tumbled in mangled heaps, and the rest recoiled as if struck by the hand of Allah. The rout was complete and Clive's redcoats and sepoys cheered and embraced, weeping with joy and relief. Madan 'Alí, his sword arm blown off, had to be dragged out from under his bullet-riddled steed. Mortally wounded, he begged his captains to leave him; but they rode back with their brave and beloved chief, weeping bitterly. While Madan 'Alí lived, the fortunes of Sirájuddawleh were yet favorable. But Madan 'Alí died moments after he was carried into the tent of his master.

[6] *Tárikh-i-Mansúri.*

Frantic with rage and despair, the Nevâb snatched at his last hope. He sent for Mír Ja'fer and begged him to be loyal. The nephew reminded his uncle of the fidelity with which he had always honored the goodly grandfather, 'Alíverdí Khán, by whose royal favor Ja'fer had grown so great. Then, tearing off his jeweled turban, the young fanatic threw it at the graybeard's feet (the most abject act of humility to which a Muslim could stoop) and cried: "In Allah's name, O uncle, avenge the death of our faithful Madan 'Alí and save me from the evils of ill-fortune. Ja'fer, by Allah, you must defend that turban!"

Mír Ja'fer 'Alí Khán (rawboned, hawk-nosed, popeyed) crossed his hands on his chest and bowed dutifully. "If it please Allah," he uttered, "I shall exert myself to the utmost to defend Your Excellency with my life." [7] Leaving the royal tent, Ja'fer galloped back to his position and dashed off a secret message to Clive, informing him of what had happened, and urging an immediate attack, which he would support from the rear. But thanks to the courier's faint heart, Clive did not receive the message till after the battle.

No sooner had Mír Ja'fer left than Sirájuddawleh branded him a traitor and turned to his other counselors. His grand vizier Rájá Ráidulábh Rám proposed a retreat to Murshidabad, thus luring the English out into an open fight. But Shrí Mohanlál, the Nevâb's lover, said, "We must stay and fight!"

As Allah willed, the terror-shaken tyrant, taking the fatal advice of his Grand Vizier, ordered a general withdrawal to the capital. Mounting a swift camel, and accompanied by his favorite wife and her eunuch bodyguard, Nevâb Sirájuddawleh Khán Behádur raced northward with an escort of two thousand horsemen. The retreat sealed his doom.

An aide directed Clive's attention to the enemy's left flank. A sudden movement. Mír Ja'fer was advancing! To the attack? "Goddamme!" Clive said. "Instruct Major Coote to open fire directly they come in range." [8]

Ja'fer's division advanced in marching order, with banners lowered and drums silent. Their aspect was far from aggressive, apparently unhostile. But who could be sure? Appearances deceive. As they ap-

[7] *Ibid.*; Husayn Khán; Kerem 'Alí.
[8] *Journal of the Expedition to Bengall.*

proached Plassey, either to join or attack Clive in the rear, they received a murderous reception. "Present—*fire*!" Coote bellowed, and a rolling volley drove them into disorder and retreat.

Then, much to the joyous amazement of Colonel Clive and his troops, the vast semicircle of dark-skinned warriors began slowly to recede. "By God," he blurted, "'tis a retrograde movement!" Clive dashed down from the roof, called to Major Coote: "The Nabob is drawing off his troops! Keep the men well in hand till we're certain 'tis not a ruse!" [9] He then returned to headquarters, there to peel off his rain-sodden togs and slip into a new scarlet-and-gold uniform.

All but Saint-Frais obeyed the Nevàb's order to fall back. He was no longer fighting for the Nevàb but for the honor of France: to avenge the inglorious loss of Chandernagore. Having secured dry powder from covered carts in Sirájuddawleh's abandoned entrenchment, the doughty Frenchman again opened fire with his four field-guns.

While Clive was changing his clothes, Major Kilpatrick seized the opportunity to play glory-hunter. Not having heard the commander's orders to Coote, and seeing the French battery unsupported by Indian cavalry, he advanced against the redoubt with 250 Madras Fusiliers and two guns—then sent word to Clive what he was doing. Clive, flushed with fury, ran out after the assault column in his long-drawers and tunic. "How dare you, sirrah," he stormed at Kilpatrick, "advance without my orders? By God, I should break you for this! Consider yourself in arrest. Fall to the rear."

"Beg pardon, sir," Kilpatrick replied with a hard smile, "but I thought you should like to see that French battery taken."

"Without as much as a 'by-your-leave'? *Hm!* Pray return to the grove and order the entire line to advance, Coote and the 39th leading." [10]

Three P.M. Clive's soldiers rushed the French redoubt with a wild cheer. Gaps were torn in their ranks by hissing grape, but they planted their flags on the mound and forced Saint-Frais to run for his life. "Push on—*push on*—forward!" Clive and his lieutenants shouted. "*Ágé jáo! ágé jáo!*" At bayonet point, the mighty army of Sirájuddawleh was scattered in a chaotic panic.

[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Ibid.*

Five P.M. The battle of Plassey was won, decisively. Its cost to the victor was twenty-four killed and forty-eight wounded. Nearly six hundred of the enemy were slain, several hundreds injured. Some called it "a stroke of luck." And undoubtedly it was. Plassey is memorable as one of the decisive battles of the world because the fate of India (and, indeed, of all the world) was there decided. A fluke of fortune? But fortune comes to those who venture.

That evening, in his lantern-lit tent, Clive composed the following preliminary report "To Chas. Watson & the Gentlemen of the Committee of Ft. William":

Gentlemen,

This Morning, at One o'Clock, we arrived at Plassey Grove; and early in the Morning the Nabob's whole Army appear'd in Sight & cannonaded us for several Hours, and about Noon return'd to a very strong Camp; upon which we advanced & storm'd the Nabob's Camp, which we have taken with all his Cannon, and persued him 6 Miles (being now at Doudpoor) & shall proceed to Moorshedabad tomorrow. Meer Jaffer, Roydoolob & Luteef Cawn gave us no other Assistance than standing neuter. Meer Muddun & 500 Horse, and 3 Elephants, are kill'd. Our Loss is trifling: not above 20 Europeans kill'd & wounded.

I am, Sirs,

Y'r most hum. obdt. Serv't,
Rob't Clive

Plain of Plassey
23rd June, 1757 [11]

He then wrote to his wife, waiting anxiously in Madras: "Thanks be to Providence, I have avenged the Black Hole & have wrested the richest Kingdom in all of India from a young Wretch whose Star has set. I now laugh to think, that had I taken the Advice of certain of my Fellow Officers, we should never have been Masters of Bengall!" [12]

Clive dropped his pen and fell fast asleep. His dispatch to Calcutta crossed one from the members of Council, dated the very same day and in answer to his request for advice: "Force on a decisive Engagement, if there is any Prospect of Success." [13] Clive could not

[11] *Fort William MS. Records; Orme Papers.*
[12] *Maskelyne Papers.*
[13] *Orme Papers.*

resist the temptation to respond that "It puts me in Mind of the famous Answer of the Delphick Oracle to Pyrrhus: *'Aio te, Aeacide, Romanos vincere posse!'* [I say that you, descendant of Aeacus, can conquer the Romans]." [14]

Had Sirájuddawleh not seized Calcutta, the need for a Plassey might not have been felt for several years. But it was inevitable. The recurrent menace of French imperialism would have forced a decision sooner or later. The law of commercial survival was immutable. And all who joined the opposition must, by necessity, be swept away with it. "A nice and important game that was, the one we played with Sirajah-dowlah." So Clive would reflect in afteryears.[15] Those were the days when "nice" meant "damned delicate." Important it was for many reasons, not least of which was that Bengal now became base of operations for the British conquest of all India. It is no exaggeration to say that the Battle of Plassey marked the advent of the Industrial Revolution. The outpouring of Bengali gold into England, which soon followed this momentous victory, provided that stimulus to British industry which helped make London the capitalistic capital of the world. It was a ruthless drain of Indian resources, justified only by right of conquest, but it proved the impotence of feudalism to cope with the rising industrialism.

The *Lákshabágh* mango grove, with its hundred thousand trees, has long since been buried or uprooted by flood. The "Plassey House" hunting lodge, gone to ruin, has been washed away by a vagrant and violent river. The old village no longer stands, and the battlefield has lost its identity. But the ghosts remain, and ever will. The Daring in War, "Fortune's darling child," has left his spirit to haunt eternity. . . .

This star of England: Fortune made his sword,
By which the world's best garden he achieved.

[14] *Ibid.*
[15] Strachey, Henry: *Papers.*

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THE AFTERMATH

After the battle, late in the evening, Colonel Clive received this message from Mír Ja'fer: "I congratulate you on executing your design, and await your desire." Clive replied: "My desire is to see you." [1]

On the morning of June 24, Clive saluted Mír Ja'fer as *Neváb-i-Bengál:* Viceroy of Bengal. Ja'fer entered Clive's camp in barbaric splendor, seated in the ornate howdah of a richly caparisoned elephant, but he was sheepish and anxious. Conscious of his own double-dealing, he could not be sure if his reception would prove anything but cold. When the honor guard presented their muskets in salute, he expected to be shot. His trembling did not cease till Clive had embraced him and addressed him as "Neváb."

Ja'fer was heartened by Clive's flexible conscience, disheartened by his iron will. "You are only a puppet," he was told point-blank, "and we English shall work the strings. But it will be well for you, as we shall never pull too hard—so long as you remain pliant. Rest assured that the English are your staunch and firm friends, and that they never desert a cause in which they have once taken a part. So flatter yourself that the victory was yours, not mine."

Clive then advised Ja'fer to hurry on to Murshidabad and seize Sirájuddawleh before he made off with the treasure promised to the victors, adding suggestively: "*Ék marú kuttá na'ín kát saktá:* A dead dog cannot bite." [2] Accompanied by his teenage son, Mírán Bég, Ja'fer 'Alí Khán sped northward to the capital. Clive now forwarded a dispatch to the Calcutta Council: "I have the Pleasure to inform you Meer Jaffer came to me this Morning, made many Expressions of Gratitude to the English, and assured us he would be faithfull to his Treaty. . . . He tells me the principal Zumeendars [landlords] have promised him the Nabob shall not escape. He [Ja'fer] is now on his

[1] Kerem 'Alí.
[2] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

March to the City [Murshidabad]. . . . I have no further Intelligence of the Nabob [Sirájuddawleh] than that he made the best of his Way to the City." [3]

Sirájuddawleh had reached his palace at Murshidabad in the evening of the twenty-third, there to await news of Clive's reaction to his withdrawal. Anticipating betrayal, he had fled the battlefield to escape captivity. Late that night, loyal remnants of his scattered forces drifted into the city with staggering news of ignominious defeat. Wrapping a white breechcloth around his loins, and winding a white turban about his head, the terror-haunted prince ran for his life. With him, also disguised as Hindu peasants, were his two favorites (Bégam Lutfunnisá and Shrí Mohanlál) and the queen's lusty Negro eunuch, whose large and long-standing *lingam* she was wont to enjoy without fear of impregnating testicles.[4] Lugging a casket loaded with royal treasure, they hastened down to the banks of the Bhagirathi and slipped off in a small boat. Rowing day and night against the swift current, seventy miles northwestward, the four exhausted and hungry fugitives came ashore at Rajmahal on June 30. Like hunted animals, they took refuge in a deserted garden near the river, there to snatch a bite to eat, catch some sleep, then off again toward Patna and safety.

But, as Allah willed it, they were spotted by a *feqír* or mendicant devotee (named Dánsháh) whose nose and ears the young tyrant had cut off a year before; and this man, recognizing Sirájuddawleh, rushed at once to inform Nevább Ja'fer's brother, Mír Da'úd Khán, vizier of Mír Qásim 'Alí Khán (Governor of Rajmahal), another brother of the new viceroy. Within minutes, the four fugitives were arrested and robbed by Da'úd and Qásim, stripped naked and clapped in chains, then boated downstream to Murshidabad—and the final reckoning.

Historian Kerem 'Alí states that Qásim and Da'úd sexually abused Sirájuddawleh, Shrí Mohanlál, and Lutfunnisá before and during the journey. Others merely employ the words "insult," "cruel treatment," and "abuse." Paraded stark-nude through the streets of his capital on July 2, Sirájuddawleh was then dragged weeping and trembling before his uncle and cousin. He kissed the floor at their feet, begging them to spare his miserable life.

[3] *Fort William MS. Records.*
[4] Kerem 'Alí.

Ja'fer was moved to pity, but not Mírán who recalled how often Sirájuddawleh had forcibly sodomized him. "Allah knows," the lad whispered to his pensive father, " 'twould be an act of folly to show mercy to such a madman, as you will never be safe so long as he remains alive."

Ja'fer sighed. "Allah forgive me," he exclaimed, "but I wash my hands of this man, helpless though he be. Do with him what you will, my son, but his blood be on your head." [5]

According to one eyewitness, court historian Ghulám Husayn Khán, "He [Sirájuddawleh] was in such a wretched condition that when the People of Allah saw him and remembered how delicately he had been bred, and how he had been raised in pomp and glory, they suddenly forgot his ferocious nature and shameful habits and abandoned themselves to an outburst of pity and compassion." But not Mírán Bég. And certainly not Mírzá 'Umer Bég, Ja'fer's chief lieutenant, whose older brother ('Alíverdí's premier, Hasen Qúlí Khán) had been murdered by order of Sirájuddawleh for conspiring with the amorous aunt, Ghasítá Bégam.

While Lutfunnisá and her eunuch were released and led to the harem of Khudáyár Letíf, Sirájuddawleh and Mohanlál were thrown into a dungeon. Late that night, Mírán Bég entered the cell with a torchbearer and a hired cutthroat. 'Umer Bég, acting under a vow of vengeance, "accepted the commission which so many had rejected with indignation." Cowering, the deposed prince muttered tremulously to his Hindu paramour: "They are not—no, they are not satisfied that I am ready and willing to crouch in some corner, there to end my days like a dog." He cackled hysterically. "No, they are not—and I must die." [6]

Ghulám Husayn informs us that Ja'fer's firstborn was "more quick-minded in slaughtering people and in committing murders" than his father. "Having a peculiar knack at such matters, and looking upon every infamous or atrocious deed as an act of prudence and foresight, his system was that such sensations as pity and compassion answered no other purpose but that of spoiling pleasurable business." With a twisted smile, Mírán meted out poetic justice. He compelled Mohanlál to analize and manually abuse Sirájuddawleh, as Sirájuddawleh

[5] *Ibid.*; Husayn Khán; *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

[6] Husayn Khán.

had done many times to Mírán; then, while the two prisoners were thus united, he ordered the assassin ('Umer) to stab Mohanlál to death. The man did so by heating the point of a lance with the torch and thrusting it up the Hindu's rectum. Sirájuddawleh bawled deliriously as Mírán drew his scimitar and slashed him to the floor gasping his last words: "*Bas! Káfíyeh; murdeh am.*" (Enough! That's enough; I'm done for.) [7]

"The butcher smote him repeatedly," says Husayn Khán, "disfiguring that beauteous face so renowned throughout Bengal for its symmetry and sweetness; and his body was hacked to pieces, by strokes without number." On the following morning, July 3, the head of Sirájuddawleh, his severed genitals stuffed in the mouth for an obscenely suggestive reason, was fixed atop the same weapon that had impaled Mohanlál. His mangled remains, flung on the back of an elephant, were paraded through the winding streets of Murshidabad, "to notify the accession of a new sovereign. And it is said that the elephant-driver, for some reason of his own, stopped for a moment: by chance at Hasen Qúlí Khán's door, where some drops of blood were seen to drip from the mangled corpse. And they fell on the very spot where, but a year and a half before, that nobleman had been murdered by order of Sirájuddawleh." The remains were then burned, the ashes dumped in a cesspit.[8]

Sirájuddawleh's mother, Amíneh Bégam, became hysterical and tore off her veil when she saw her son's corpse. In fact, she made such a public spectacle of herself that a noble neighbor ordered one of his eunuchs to drag her back into the harem. While this show was being enacted, Mírán was importuning Lutfunnisá to grant him her favors. "How could one who has been used to riding elephants now ride an ass?" she retorted. So he raped her, with the aid of two eunuchs.[9]

Watts recorded in his journal:

> *Such was ye End of Sirajah-dowlah, in ye Prime of his Youth, being at ye Hour of his Death scarce 20 Years of Age. An End suitable to his Life, which had been spent in Violence & Blood! It has been surmized, and very probably not all-together without Grounds,*

[7] *Ibid.*; Kerem 'Alí; *Tárikh-i-Mansúrí.*
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*

that there was some thing of Collusion in this Matter between ye Father & ye Son [Ja'fer and Mírán]: a thing, indeed, not at all unfrequent in this Part of ye World; and what made it pass for a Kind of Justice was ye Remembrance that People had that this unhappy Young Man, Sirajah-dowlah, had been often employ'd in ye very same Acts by ye old Soobahdar [Viceroy], *Ally-verdy Cawn, who (availing himself of ye sanguinary Disposition of his Grandson) made Use of him to remove such as thro' Avarice, Suspicion, or Resentment he inclined to have taken away, and then (to save Appearances) disavow'd ye Fact.*

Men sow the seeds of their own destruction.

Saiyed Ghulám Husayn Khán, who knew him as well as any Muslim could know the "Beast of Bengal," composed this epitaph for the unlamented Mírzá Mehmúd 'Alí Neváb Sirájuddawleh Khán Behádur: "Confusing virtue with vice, and so bereft of reason, he abused himself and defiled male and female in broad daylight—erecting houses of whoredom in his own honor, and turning every entertainment into an orgy—befouling his hands with innocent blood, and burdening his conscience with countless crimes against humanity. To be sure, the Israelites hated Pharaoh no more than Bengalis despised Sirájuddawleh, of whom they said: 'Allah save us from him!' "

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THE SPOILS

Robert Clive, at the age of thirty-one, was master of Bengal. Even in the remotest Indian villages, from the Sunderbunds to the Himalayas, the name "Sábit Jang" was on everyone's lips, and he was hailed as *Baré Jangí-Lát Sáhib Behádur:* Great and Bold Warlord Sahib.[1]

June 29, 1757. The challenger, now the conqueror, seated beside Neváb Ja'fer 'Alí Khán Behádur in a magnificent howdah, atop a towering elephant gorgeously arrayed, marched through the capital

[1] Kerem 'Alí; Husayn Khán; *Tárikh-i-Mansúri.*

with a drum-thundering, cymbal-crashing escort of five hundred redcoats and sepoys. Garbed in a jeweled turban and gold-embroidered robe of honor, Clive felt what Cortés or Pizarro must have felt when they strode in triumph through the inner strongholds of Montezuma and Atahualpa. Thousands, thronging the streets and balconies and roofs, salaamed in awed silence as he passed. They bowed to Clive, not their new Neváb; for they recognized Clive as ruler, Ja'fer as figurehead. And so it was, in reality. In their recognition of conquerors Orientals were sharply realistic.

Clive found Murshidabad "as extensive, populous & rich as the City of London: with this Difference, that there are Individuals in Moorshedabad possessing infinitely greater Property than any in London." [2] The royal city was a pleasure garden of opalescent palaces, pearly mosques, and towering minarets. It was the Baghdad of India, its bazaars bulging with goods and its cultured inhabitants deporting themselves with a dignity befitting their clean streets and well-kept houses. Clive was enchanted by this *Arabian Nights* wonderland, which 'Alíverdí Khán had aggrandized and which his infamous heir had degraded.

Clive was lodged in the *Mubárek Manzil* or "Blessed Abode," the ex-Neváb's harem, a pleasure palace set in a garden paradise. Was not such a place promised to all the Faithful by the Prophet Muhammed? *And for the pious is prepared an abode of eternal bliss: gardens and pavilions, and damsels with swelling breasts, and fair boys and a full cup.* A dozen beautiful women were his to embrace; and "he futtered them all (*ník temám-i-íshán*)," says the *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí*, "as befitting a great conqueror." *Ager firdaws ber-i-zemín ast, hemín ast; hemín ast:* If there be a heaven on earth, it is here; it is here!

Clive found the Mubarek Manzil heaped with *nuzzers* and *dustooree*, ceremonial gifts and customary tributes worthy of his supreme authority, precious stones and metals, carved ivory, sumptuous silks and brocades, "and God knows what else: to say nought of sundry Letters of Congratulations." [3] Cognizant of the Oriental sentiment that " 'Tis better to give than to be shaken down," he thanked the donors but returned the gifts stating: "Please Allah, I do not want your wealth. I only seek your assistance in establishing a new govern-

[2] *Clive Papers.*
[3] *Ibid.*

ment."[4] This high-mindedness favorably impressed even the most cynical Muslims, who suspected every European of being a plunderer. By this diplomatic gesture, Clive won their trust and devotion as he had their fear and respect. Thus a plot against his life, hatched by certain nobles, was foiled!

Escorted by Mírán Bég, Clive strode into the *durbár* (court of audience) at Murshidabad's royal palace. It was a splendid hall with a luxuriously carpeted floor of mosaic marble, mirrored walls of paneled mahogany and tessellated marble slabs, filigree'd and latticed windows, arabesque entranceways, crystal-and-silver chandeliers, gold-embroidered drapes and elaborate tapestries, and richly carved divans piled with velvet cushions and covered with satins and silks. An assemblage of Muslim and Hindu noblemen lined the room, their jewel-bedizened turbans aglitter and spangled robes aglow as they bowed in salaam.

Ja'fer 'Alí made obeisance to Clive at the foot of the gem-inlaid throne, then garlanded him with lotus blossoms and anointed him with rosewater. Clive salaamed ceremoniously, touching forehead and chest and genitals, then took the graybeard by the hand and said aloud: "*Yá Ja'fer 'Alí Khán, khil'at-i-Neváb-i-Bengál bishumá mídádím.*" (O Ja'fer 'Alí Khán, we invest you as Viceroy of Bengal.)[5] Clive employed the respectful plural form, which everyone understood as "I, Sábit Jang, proclaim you Neváb!" Ja'fer tried to seat Clive first, as a token of respect, but Clive side-stepped the gesture and forced Ja'fer to be seated. Officially enthroned, Ja'fer saluted Clive as *Zábitul-Mulk Násiruddawleh Sábit Jang Behádur:* Master of the Kingdom, Champion of Empire, the Daring and Dauntless in War.[6] Standing by the throne, Clive addressed the gathering of grandees in their native tongue, assuring them that "it is not the way of the English to war against a friendly government" and that "commerce is our proper sphere and our only aim in these parts."[7] The nobles nodded enthusiastic approval.

Early next morning, Clive and Ja'fer entered the Murshidabad treasury. Like Cortés and Pizarro in the treasurehouses of the Aztecs

[4] Kerem 'Alí.
[5] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
[6] Kerem 'Alí.
[7] Husayn Khán; *Fort William MS. Records.*

and Incas, the English conquistador was wonderstruck. Gleaming heaps of gold and silver, crowned with sparkling piles of jewels, reached to the ceiling. But by the time the enormous debt with which Clive & Company had saddled Ja'fer was paid off in full, there were barely enough shekels left to meet the expenses of government. Only by imposing extortionate taxes was Ja'fer able to save the state from bankruptcy, but the discontent thus fomented ultimately led to his undoing. Ja'fer, it seems, had made a deal with the devil; and there was the devil to pay. "I acquired only 5,000,000 Rupees [three million more than the treaty stipulated]," Clive wrote to his wife, "which evens out to about £250,000. But what do I want with Riches?" [8] What indeed!

Clive the Kingmaker then penned (June 30) to Drake and Council: "I enter'd the City yesterday Morning. . . . The Inhabitants, who were Spectators upon that Occasion, must have amounted to some Hundred Thousands; and if they had had an Inclination to destroy the Europeans, they might have done it with Sticks & Stones! In the Afternoon I waited on Jaffer Ally Cawn, . . . & saluted him as Nabob. . . . This great Revolution, so happily brought about, seems compleat in every Respect." [9]

Accompanied by Luke Scrafton, Ámíchand Mahájan hastened to Murshidabad like a jackal looking forward to a lion's share. He bowed obsequiously to Robert Clive, uttered "*Asírvádam, ay Lát Sá'b!*" (God bless you, O Lord Sahib!), then eyed him with anxious anticipation. Clive turned to Scrafton and muttered: " 'Tis now the time to undeceive Omychund." Scrafton nodded gravely. Clive stepped forward. "Ámíchand," he said in Hindustani, "the pink treaty—the one you signed—was a trick. You are to get nothing." Ámíchand started in disbelief. "*Chal?*" he gasped. *A trick!* Clive nodded. "*Á'í! á'í!*" the Hindu shrieked, slapping his glossy pate with both hands. "Thus it was written on my forehead! *Lál-kághaz! lál-kághaz:* the pink paper! the pink paper!" Ámíchand was carried out in a babbling, drooling delirium. The tricker tricked—out of twenty million rupees. Clive commented wryly: "Those who will play with cats must expect to be scratched." [10]

[8] *Maskelyne Papers.*
[9] *Fort William MS. Records.*
[10] *Scrafton Letters; Orme Papers;* Kerem 'Ali, *et al.*

Robert Orme has recorded that Clive's words overpowered Ámíchand "like a Blast of Sulphur. He sunk back, fainting, and would have fallen to the Ground had not one of his Attendants caught him in his Arms. They carried him to his Pallanquin, in which they convey'd him to his House, where he remain'd many Hours in stupid Melancholy and began to shew some Symptoms of Insanity." [11] Ámíchand never seemed to regain his senses. "He shams sickness," Clive later said to Scrafton, "and swears he has lost faith in man; but I expect that a handsome return on his investment in Jaffer will straighten him out soon enough." [12]

But Ámíchand died within eighteen months after the shock: some said of a broken heart, others of a slow poison administered by a native doctor. Making the latter cause more likely is a letter from the Council to Clive, advising, "It would be better that Omychund was in Calcutta, lest he do Prejudice to the Cause." [13] A virtual prisoner in the City of Palaces, it is probable that the oily Brahman plotted revenge ("Ámíchand can never forgive"); that the conspiracy was exposed and that it brought his doom. Orme writes: "He visited Colonel Clive, who advized him to make a Pilgrimage to some Pagoda, which he accordingly did . . . and return'd insane, his Mind every Day more and more approaching to Idiotism. . . . In this State of Imbecillity, he died about a Year and a Half after the Shock of his Disappointment." [14] James Mill adds that "Not an Englishman, not even Mr. Orme, has yet expressed a word of sympathy and regret." Nor, at that time, had any Indian: not a single native chronicler.

But Clive paid him a fitting tribute, while yet he lived, in a letter to the Council on August 6: "Omychund had merited well while acting in Concert with Mr. Watts; but I had Reason to think his intriguing Disposition was carrying him too far in the Persuit of his private Interest, therefore recommended to him a Visit of Devotion [to a Hindu shrine or place of pilgrimage]. He is a Person capable of rendering you great Service while properly restrain'd, therefore not to be wholly discarded." [15] Well, "the powers that be" thought other-

[11] *Military Transactions.*
[12] *Scrafton Letters.*
[13] *Orme Papers.*
[14] *Military Transactions.*
[15] *Fort William MS. Records.*

wise; and Ámíchand was "wholly discarded." He left the unstolen remains of his astronomical fortune to charity, most conspicuous of which were the Foundling Hospital and the Magdalene Hospital (a reformatory for prostitutes or potential "magdalenes") in London.[16]

The reaction in Calcutta to Clive's marvelous victory was jubilant. The Black Hole atrocity had been avenged and the Beast of Bengal destroyed. Best of all, the British were now guardians of the Eden of India. Captain Latham, Admiral Watson's aide-de-camp, wrote to Colonel Clive: "We talk of great Doings on this happy Occasion [i.e., Clive's triumphal return to Calcutta], and expect a World of Guns to be fired & the Ladies all to get Foot-sore with Dancing. I can assure You that a Bumper goes to your Health each Day in every House, from the Admiral's downwards." [17] In their letter of congratulations and gratitude, the members of Calcutta Council stated: "The Revolution effected by your gallant Conduct, and the Bravery of the Officers and Soldiers under you, is of extra-ordinary Importance, not only to the Company, but to the British Nation in general, that We think it incumbent to return You and your Officers our sincere Thanks, on behalf of His Britannick Majesty and the East India Company, for your Behaviour on this critical and important Occasion." [18]

Even the stiff Charles Watson sent his rival a personal message of tribute, perhaps to speed on the greedily awaited share of treasure: "Your Letter of the 23rd inst. to the Select Committee & myself, informing us of your Success against the Nabob Serajah-dowlah, hath given me the greatest Pleasure. Mr. Pococke [Watson's second-in-command] desires to join with me in congratulating You thereon, and in Best Wishes for the same good Success in all you undertake, that our Affairs may be soon happily settled & a speedy End put to the present Troubles." [19] The Admiral was overjoyed when Clive replied that Nevâb Ja'fer was sending him a special gift along with the stipulated share of loot. (Clive's *nuzzer* from the Nevâb amounted to some three million rupees, as hitherto noted.)

July 2. Colonel Clive reported to the Calcutta Council: "Sirajah-

[16] *Orme Papers.*
[17] *Clive Papers.*
[18] *Orme Papers.*
[19] *Clive Papers.*

dowlah [captured by Qásim and Da'úd] will be in the City this Evening. The Nabob [Ja'fer], who is an humane, generous & honest Prince, intends only to confine him & to allow him all the Indulgence which a Prison can admit of. [This was written on the eve of Sirájuddawleh's doom. Clive never reckoned on Mírán and 'Umer.] Yesterday we began to embark the Treasure in Boats." [20]

On July 3, while the mangled remains of Sirájuddawleh were being paraded through the streets of Murshidabad, an argosy of two hundred state barges floated a cargo of loot down the Hooghly to Fort William "with Musick playing, Drums beating, and Colours flying." In Scrafton's words, the pageant "exhibited to the French & Dutch, by whose Settlements it pass'd, a Scene far different from what they had beheld the Year before, when the Nabob's Fleet & Army pass'd them with the captive English and all the Wealth & Plunder of Calcutta." Orme, when informed of this "triumphal Procession," would assert that "Never before did the English Nation at one Time obtain such a Prize in Solid Money." [21]

The Right Honourable Directors in London, forswearing all responsibility in the private affairs of their servants in Bengal, officially declared that "It is not our Intention to break in upon any Sums of Money which have been given by the Nabob to particular Persons by way of Free Gift or Gratuity for their Services." [22] *Amen!* Why bite the hands that feed? They were themselves raking in £150,000 a year in *dustooree*, gramercy to free enterprise and its champions. For diplomatic reasons, Clive had refused to accept any gifts (with the manhood-proving temporary exception of concubines) from the aristocrats and capitalists of Murshidabad. However, he regarded the present from Neváb Ja'fer as a legitimate token of gratitude for services rendered. Had not the Court of Directors allowed him a free hand in the honorable acquisition of private fortune? Neither the Company's nor the King's regulations forbade the acceptance of *largesse* from foreign nobles, so long as extortion was not the cause of liberality. This was only fair, considering the poor wages and paltry allowances paid by the tightfisted John Company.

[20] *Fort William MS. Records.*
[21] *Orme Journal; Military Transactions.*
[22] *E.I.C. (Bengal) Records.*

That Clive never concealed his good fortune, and that no immediate repercussions attended it, is evidence of the prevalent laissez-faireism. He openly acknowledged to Chairman John Payne:

> *Exclusive of the Treaty or any Agreement whatever, the Nabob (of his own Free Will, for the Services render'd him) made me a Present much beyond my Expectations: part of which I bestow'd on those immediately about me & one or two of the principal Officers. I never made the least Secret of this Affair, but always thought the World ought to be acquainted with the Nabob's Gratitude. . . . If I had been disposed to grow rich by receiving Presents from any other Hands but those of the Nabob, surely no one had ever the like Opportunity; but there is not that Man, living among the daily Temptations which offer'd, who can accuse me of receiving any thing of Value but from the Nabob himself. I have troubled you with these Particulars because, among Some, it may be computed as a Crime my being rich. If it be a Crime, You, Sir, are truly acquainted with the Nature of it!* [23]

If Clive was a "plunderer," he plundered in the yeomanly English tradition of Robin Hood; for he immediately gave away three quarters of his new-made fortune. To each of his five sisters went a dowry of £2000, with this *verbum sapienti* to their sire: "I would advize the Lasses to marry as soon as possible, for they have no Time to lose." [24] His parents' £500 annuity was doubled, his friends and relatives (e.g., cousin George: £15,000) and his parents-in-law handsomely endowed. Maskelyne, at Fort St. David, was blest with £15,000 "for remaining a staunch Friend thro' thick & thin." [25] Even the "Old Cock," Colonel Stringer Lawrence, was provided an annual allowance of £500 and this message: "It gives me great Pleasure that I have an Opportunity given me of shewing my Gratitude to the Man to whom my Reputation and, of course, my Fortune is owing." [26]

Clive's victory notice to his father reveals the ambitious nature which was changing the destiny of the world: "A Revolution has been effected, by Means of the Military only, scarcely to be parallell'd in

[23] *Orme Papers.*
[24] *Clive Papers.*
[25] *Maskelyne Papers.*
[26] *Orme Papers.*

History. . . . If I can get into Parliament, I shall be very glad: but no more Struggles against the Ministry; I choose to be one of them." [27] He then wrote to his chief financial agent, William Belchier: "The Company & private Persons are Gainers 3 Millions Sterling by this Revolution, besides which the Co. have had a Tract of Land given them which will produce near £150,000 per annum. . . . I wait for nothing but the Settlement of these Provinces to begin my Voyage for Old England. . . . I intend getting into Parliament, and have Hopes of being taken some Notice of by His Majesty." [28] To his erstwhile partner Rob Orme, then hard at work in Madras on A *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan,* Clive penned: "I am possess'd of Volumes of Materials for the Continuance of your History, in which will appear Fighting, Tricks, Chicanery, Intrigues, Politicks, and the Lord knows what! In short, there will be a fine Field for you to display your Genius in." Holding with Juvenal that " 'Tis plain Madness to live in Want that you may die rich," Clive invited Orme to purchase on his account "the finest & best you can get for Love or Money." [29] Orme replied: "I must confess to You that my Fingers itch to write your Revolution. . . . Your unbounded Generosity has made many compleatly happy." [30]

"I may acquire a Fortune," Clive wrote to his wife, "but no Fortune shall acquire me! Your most humble & devoted Servant is wholly unlike he that heapeth up Riches & knoweth not who shall gather them. As Sam Johnson said, 'Tis better to live rich than to die rich; yet I should add, with Bacon, that no Man's Fortune can be an End & worthy of his Being." [31]

As if in mockery of this noble sentiment, a verbal battle was soon waged between the army and navy over the distribution of prize money. The sailors, few in number, were begrudged an equal share by the soldiery; and so it raged, *ad nauseam.* Clive, learning of the dispute from an infuriated Watson, instantly vented his indignation in a communiqué to the "selfish & unjust" army officers, chief of whom were Majors Coote and Kilpatrick:

[27] *Clive Papers.*
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Orme Papers.*
[30] *Clive Papers.*
[31] *Maskelyne Papers.*

> *Pray, Gentlemen, how comes it that a Promise of a Sum of Money from the Nabob, entirely negotiated by me, can be deem'd a Matter of Right or Property? . . . You have storm'd no Town & found the Money there; neither did you find it in the Plains of Plassey. . . . In short, Gentlemen, it pains me to remind You that what you are to receive is entirely owing to the Care I took of your Interests: . . . in return for which I have been treated with the greatest Disrespect & Ingratitude; and what is still worse, you have flown in the Face of my Authority. . . . Your Behaviour has been such, that you can not expect I should interest myself any further in your Concerns.*[32]

That ended the hassel almost at once, with written regrets and apologies all around. Clive then chided Governor Drake for not exerting his influence to settle the dispute, adding pointedly: "And I can not help thinking that had the Expedition miscarried, You would have lay'd the whole Blame upon me." [33]

Then another annoyance tried Clive's patience, again involving the army. He had dispatched Major Eyre Coote upriver with a detachment of redcoats and sepoys to crush a small French force commanded by Capitaine Jean-Marie Law. Learning that Law was in flight toward the frontier, Coote allegedly took his time in pursuit, his men being indulged in looting and raping. When the Major himself, goat-drunk, reportedly violated the teenage daughter of Shivanáth Rái, *fawjdár* or chief magistrate of Rajmahal, that was the last straw.[34]

Clive drove his quill angrily:

> *There is such a Complaint against you from Sheevnautroy [Shivanáth Rái], the Foujdar of Rajmahall, as had made me blush: tho' I know not how to give Credit to it. He writes the Feringhee [European] Forces had enter'd the Fort, thrown down their Guns & Nogarrahs [drums], plunder'd every part of it; that You, of all People [Coote was the son of a clergyman], had outraged his Daughter; and that the Soldiers & Sepoys have gone into all the Houses in the Town, insulted the Women & stole their Effects. What need I say that such Behaviour may give the Country-people a Disgust to us, and be of the*

[32] *Orme Papers.*

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí* (*Kút Behádur bikárat-i-dukhter-i-Shivnát Rái bi-zúr burd:* Coote Behádur forcibly took the virginity of Shivanáth Rái's daughter).

utmost Ill-consequence to the Company's Affairs! I desire that henceforward You will not enter their Forts nor take any thing from them —not even Provisions, if to be bought, and that You will have as little Connexion with Country-people as possible.

He then added, emphatically: "When I sent you after M. Law, I gave you positive Orders to persue him. Why then do you delay, when your Force is larger than his?" [35]

Coote answered that the *fawjdár* was a "Villain" and his accusations false: that the only "damage" done was to a big gun in the Rajmahal citadel, the barrel of which some soldiers had loaded with mud.

Who did it, I could not find out; nor can I be answerable for such foolish Actions. . . . Had You yourself known the Fatigue of Body & Uneasiness of Mind I have suffer'd since I came upon this Expedition, you would have pitied me instead of condemning my Conduct. But I thank God I have long ago learnt to bear with Resignation this & other Ills attending the Life of a Soldier. . . . The Complaint of the Foujdar of Rajmahall greatly surprizes me. . . . I now repeat that he is a Villain & his Accusations false, and that we All suffer'd more at that Place than anywhere else: he deceiving us daily in every thing he promised to assist us in. . . . I beg you'll believe I shall allways act so as to keep my Conduct clear & my Enemies from having any handle over me.[36]

As fate would have it, Law escaped into the province of Oudh. His expedition a failure, Coote was recalled to Murshidabad. Ever since the episode at Fort William, Clive's opinion of *Kút Behádur* (Hammering Hero), as the natives called Coote, had gone down and was now at its lowest. When Coote informed Kilpatrick of Clive's disfavor, Kilpatrick wrote to his chief: "Let me assure You, there is not a Man in India that I esteem more Worthy of the Title of a Friend, a Soldier & a Man of strict Honour, nor whose Merit & Conduct I am more sensible of, than Maj. Coote's." [37]

With peace and safety restored to the kingdom of Bengal, Clive

[35] *Wilks MSS.*; *Orme Papers* (this copy contains no reference to Coote's turpitude).

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] *Clive Papers.*

returned to Calcutta. "If I was to consult my own Interests only," he penned to Pigot, "every thing conspires to make me desirous of leaving this Province. An unhealthy Climate, a bad Constitution, a genteel Competence, a possible Reverse of Fortune, are strong Motives to have done so; but a superior Consideration to all these obliges me to continue some Days longer." [38]

A shadow of gloom darkened Clive's triumphal return. On August 16, Admiral Charles Watson fell victim to the Indian climate. Two months later, Major James Kilpatrick followed him to the grave, struck down by Asiatic cholera. Instead of festivities there were funerals, an ominous opening of the new era. "Unhappy Fate!" Clive wrote of Watson, "after having escaped all the Risque of War, to be thus untimely cut off [at the age of forty-three] in the Midst of his Successes, crown'd with Glory & Reputation. . . . This is but one of the many Lessons given us of the Instability of Human Nature." [39] He then communicated to Chairman Payne: "There is nothing but the Good of the Service can induce me to stay in this unhealthy Climate. I suffer much at this Time of Year; however, I must see every thing settled first." [40] And to the Court of Directors: "Be assured, Gentlemen, that it is solely a Desire of seeing your Affairs (important as they now are) firmly establish'd that detains me in Bengall." [41]

The Company Directors erected a monument to Watson's memory in Westminster Abbey, home of his father. But the Admiral's heirs were less interested in memorials than they were in heritable remains. They brawled for years with the E.I.C., contending that Watson had been robbed by Clive of his rightful share: whatever, indeed, that was! Clive laughed. "A plague upon it when thieves cannot be true one to another!" [42]

[38] *Pigot Papers.*
[39] *Orme Papers.*
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] *Intrigues of a Nabob.*

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THE HEAVEN-BORN GENERAL

The world was astounded, England elated, by the tidings from Hindustan. In Europe, the Seven Years' War had been dragging on inconclusively. In North America, French (and Indian) arms were everywhere triumphant. Braddock had been dealt a smashing defeat in his attempt to capture Fort Duquesne; and Oswego (Fort Ontario) had been ingloriously lost to Montcalm. Minorca, in the Mediterranean, fell to France, a fiasco for which Admiral Byng was shot, prompting Voltaire's remark that "In England it is thought well to kill an admiral now and then to encourage the others." Walpole lamented: "Minorca is gone; Oswego gone; ye Nation is in a Ferment. . . . It is Time for England to slip her own Cables, and float away into some unknown Ocean." [1] But in faraway India, an Englishman with a "pocket Army" had routed a "giant Horde" and won a "Land of Plenty" for the East India Company. *Clive! Plassey!* Electric words!

"*Clive?*" burst out the Duke of Newcastle. "Why, the man's mad!"

"Oh, he's mad, is he?" King George retorted. "Then I wish he would *bite* some other of my generals!"

"All geniuses are a little mad," said the new Prime Minister, Mr. William Pitt. "Clive has restored the honor of England in the eyes of Europe. If this be madness, then there's method in it!" [2] The Great Commoner proclaimed in Parliament:

> *We have lost our glory, honor, and reputation everywhere but in India. There the country has that man not born for a desk, a heaven-born general who hath never learnt the art of war or that skill in doing nothing which only forty years of service can bring. Nor is his name*

[1] Walpole, Horace: *Letters.*
[2] *Malcolm's Anecdotes.*

enrolled among the great officers who have for many years received their country's pay. Yet he was not afraid to attack a numerous army with a handful of men: with a resolution and an execution that would charm the King of Prussia, and with a presence of mind that astonished the Indies.[3]

When Pitt came to power, he declared: "I am sure I can save the country, and that no one else can." [4] England, on the brink of financial ruin after a generation of ill-fought wars, was sore in need of an opulent East India Company to see it clear. Clive, by his decisive victory at Plassey, opened a nearly inexhaustible gold mine whose possibilities Pitt had the wisdom to calculate.

Writing to his son, Richard Clive declared that "Ye whole Kingdom is in Transports for ye Glory & Success their Countryman hath gain'd." [5] Secretary of State Thomas Pelham-Holles, First Duke of Newcastle, wrote to Chairman Payne that he would recommend their new national hero to the Crown; "as I have ye Pleasure of knowing Col. Clive personally, and have a great Regard for his Father." [6] Wondrous how success baits the hook of patronage! Newcastle had frustrated Clive's bid for a seat in Parliament, and had invited him to forgive and forget—and, as a token of graciousness, had been instrumental in securing his lieutenant colonel's commission from the King.

No sooner had Nevâb Ja'fer taken the throne than he began plotting to cut the strings that bound him to John Company. With the French driven out of Bengal, he entered into secret communication with the Dutch at Chinsurah, thirty miles north of Calcutta. He then approached Jagat Séth, the richest banker in India, but Jagat cried a poor mouth.

The wealthy Hindu was, in reality, conspiring with his old friend Rájá Ráidulábh Rám, Ja'fer's vizier, who was in turn conspiring with Drake Sáhib for the dethronement of "that doting, schemey, lecherous Old Rascal." [7] Their plan was to replace Ja'fer with Sirájuddawleh's younger brother, Mírzá Mehdí, an adolescent whom Clive

[3] *Parliamentary History of England.*
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Clive Papers.*
[6] *Orme Papers.*
[7] *Pigot Papers.*

described as "almost an Idiot & a notorious Catamite." [8] They saw him as a convenient puppet. Clive opposed the project as "idiotick, impolitick & dishonourable, and calculated to make Us the Laughing-stock of the World & Roydoolob (by the Grace of Drake & Juggut Seith) Nabob of Bengall." [9]

But Ja'fer was one step ahead of the intriguers. He had Mírán chop off the boy's head and send it to Drake wrapped in red silk. Clive thereupon advised Ráidulábh to flee for his life, lest his head provide a second grisly gift to the "Calcutta Cabal." Jagat escaped with him to Patna, where they enlisted the support of its Hindu governor, Rájá Rámnáráyan, as well as of the Rajahs of Midnapore and Purneah—and even of the Muslim Neváb of Oudh, Shujá-'uddawleh Khán, who had his designs upon the bountiful kingdom. The five Hindus had good reason to fear Ja'fer, who had been plotting their overthrow from the very beginning of his rule. It was his design to replace all non-Musalman (i.e., pro-British) officials with his own flunkies, and to confiscate the House of Séth on a new trumped-up charge of treason as his late unlamented nephew had done. But thanks to Clive's watchfulness, maneuvering had to be done through narrow straits. Now united, with promised support from the mercenary Neváb of Oudh, the endangered Rajahs defied him.

Against such adversaries, Ja'fer needed allies. The Dutch had money, but few troops. The English had both, in abundance. The Viceroy decided, *faute de mieux*, to play up to Clive. But Clive was disgusted with this tiresome game. Invoking their treaty of alliance, Ja'fer offered him a hundred thousand rupees a month for his protection. But Clive, knowing the Neváb would have to rob his people blind in order to pay such a price, refused. Instead, he urged and finally persuaded Ja'fer's enemies to allow him enough rope to hang himself; and Clive was thus able to secure "all the Advantages that could be expected or wish'd, both to the Nabob & the Company, without Bloodshed." [10]

By ignoring yet not violating the alliance, Clive would prevail upon or depose Ja'fer the civilized way: through diplomacy. As he instructed his agents at Murshidabad: "I would have you act upon all

[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Bengal MS. Records.*

Occasions so as to avoid coming to Extremities, and at the same Time shew as much Spirit & Resolution as will convince the Durbar [royal court] that we always have it in our Power to make ourselves respected." [11]

Ráidulábh Rám and Jagat Séth, granted amnesty, returned to the capital; and Ja'fer 'Alí vowed not to harm them and never to try to replace Rámnáráyan, Governor of Patna, with Mír Qásim: "a greater Fool & Paederast than Meer Jaffer," Clive opined.[12] He then informed Pigot: "I have apply'd to the Nabob for the exclusive Priviledge of purchasing Salt-petre [important in the manufacture of gunpowder], and am in Hopes of obtaining it. This will be attended with considerable Advantage to the Comp'y & equal Distress to their Rivals in Trade, the Dutch." [13] As a token of his good faith, the Neváb complied and the lucrative monopoly in saltpeter for which the Dutch East India Company had long been angling came into English hands. Then, much to Clive's surprise, none other than the Grand Mughal ('Álemgír Sháh Behádur) was pleased to bestow upon him the supreme military distinction of *Emír-i-Túmán* or "Commander of Ten Thousand Horse." Among other tributes, Emperor 'Álemgír sent him a green banner embroidered with a gold fish: ancient symbol of the circumcised phallus, Mughal token of potence and prestige. Clive was now highly esteemed among the Circumcised, with whom he shared a "covenant of the flesh." [14]

June, 1758. A year after his decisive victory, Colonel Robert Clive was appointed Vice-President of the Calcutta Council "in Consideration of his eminent and repeated Services." [15] Neváb Ja'fer 'Alí Khán congratulated him as "an instrument of destiny" (*álat-i-qader*), but Clive could not share in this sentiment. He had expected the governorship, a more fitting reward for his services. When Roger Drake was dismissed for incompetence, a four-man rotation system was authorized to govern the Company territory in Bengal. Clive was not named one of the four rotary governors.

The reason seemed quite clear to him. He was regarded as a danger-

[11] *Orme Papers.*
[12] *Pigot Papers.*
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] Kerem 'Alí; *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
[15] *Bengal MS. Records.*

ous independent by the Court of Directors, one not apt to take orders from a set of armchair merchants, and more apt to act on his own under the guise of serving the best interests of his employers. Serve them he did, but in a manner that also served his personal power, profit, and prestige. Providently, however, the lonely youth of a decade ago had won many friends in the past few years—and not by wealth alone. Of their own accord the four appointees (Watts, Holwell, Becher, and Manningham) wrote to Clive, offering to surrender their nominations and to serve under him as permanent Governor-President.

Clive wrote to his old chum and confidant, Governor George Pigot of Madras:

> *The absurd System of Gov't order'd from Home, and the fatal Consequences likely to attend it in these Parts, have induced me (at the particular Request of the Gentlemen in Council) to accept of the Management of Affairs* [as *Governor-President of Calcutta*] *for the present. I must confess that I accepted the Offer much against my own Inclination, I assure you; for . . . I have no Reason to be satisfy'd with the Treatment of the* [Company] *Directors. . . . You will observe, they greatly disapprove the independent Powers given me by you Gentlemen: tho' All their Successes in Bengall be owing to that Act of Authority. . . . I hope my Good Friend will acquit me the Crime of Vanity in expressing my Apprehensions of the evil Consequences of my leaving Bengall at this Juncture; for there is such a Connexion between the Nabob, myself & his Great Men that I greatly fear my Absence would throw all into Confusion. These foolish People ground their Opinions & Confidence on one Man's Abilities alone.*

He added, in reference to the dismissed and disgraced Roger Drake: "I am afraid good Advice is but thrown away on such a Wretch, lost to all Sense of Shame. Not a Week passes but at his own Table he is saluted with the Title of Scoundrel & Rascal, from the meanest of the Inhabitants, without shewing the least Resentment." [16]

Drake, it seems, was a notorious and dangerous lecher: "flagrantly immoral." And few forgave or forgot his arrant cowardice. "His Keeping of Native Girls & Boys (ye very Scum of Black Society) was not so

[16] *Pigot Papers.*

alarming," Watts writes, "as his having divulged to them our most guarded Secrets; whereat they in turn pass'd them on to ye Nabob [Ja'fer] & his Minions. If one would traffick with ye Country-people, one must be (like Mr. Clive) more prudent: as quoth he, 'I never say but two Words to ye Wench I bed; to wit, ye Sollicitation & ye Grammercy.' And 'twill be recall'd that Mr. Drake so stoop'd, in his earliest Intrigues, as to suffer that vile filthy Rogue Shawcutt Jung [Shawkat Jang, Sirájuddawleh's rival cousin] to irrumate him; and 'tis no Exaggeration to guess that Drake did most foully fellate ye damn'd Pathick in turn." [17]

Aggravated by the climate and overexertion, Clive's nervous disorder rarely left him completely relieved of discomfort or pain. He was never free from mildly remittent fever, eased only by quinine and opium, and his inherent melancholia drove him to alternating fits of anxiety and overwork. And sexual excess; for Clive's villa, opposite Fort William in "Garden Reach," was visited nightly by native females seeking fame and fortune (or a cure for barrenness) as mistresses of the omnipotent Sábit Jang. Watts noted,

> *His Chawkydar [doorman] is oblidged to drive them away like Cattle, for they let up such a Clamour as to disturb ye general Peace; but he will, by his Master's Bidding, admit ye few Veil'd Wantons, as they (being Mahomedan) are esteem'd cleaner & more refined than ye filthy ignorant Gentoo Slatterns, who are generally much diseased & rank to lie with. Pimps he hath a-plenty: scurrilous black Urchins, Cunny-hunters from ye Cradle, that brag of their Master's extravagant Tastes & Gargantuan Lust.* No five Cocks could ever swive/ Half so hard as Rob't Clive: *So our white Devillings chaunt, ye while making lewd Motions of Onanism, ye which they observe Native Imps at in ye Streets: "a vile Habit they teach our English Boys," says Dr. Ives, "ye Worst because they are Uncircumcized & therefore apt to Injure themselves by it"; for that he hath treated many a torn or inflamed Foreskin. I ask, Is this a Cause why ye Moors clip their Boys—ye better to take ye Soreness out of Self-abuse & violent Venery, to which they are much given, to say nought of ye Prick-peeling Sodomy?* [18]

[17] *Watts Journal.*
[18] *Ibid.*

Dr. Ives alludes to Clive's hypersexuality in the following journal entry for September 2, 1757:

> *One should expect that Col. Clive, by his uncommon Popularity with ye Sex [women] & his excessive Exercize of ye Generative Instruments, is possess'd of impressive & imposing Virile Parts; to ye contrary: in examining him for a suspected Clap, his* Verpa [circumcised penis] *erected to scarce 12 Cms. [almost five inches], which is indeed below ye Average! Circumference-wize, however, he hath ye Palm over ye Average; and his inordinate Erectability is like to that of ye* Simiae [apes], *who are purported extreamly Copulatory.*

Clive's constant irritability, his brooding silences and spells of savage cynicism, made him the terror of Briton and Indian alike. He seemed happiest when hard at work; yet work led to strain, and strain to pain, and pain to moodiness and moroseness. And cruelty. The cruelty of male animals when in a periodic state of lustful frenzy: *mast*, "madness," the natives called it. But when in *mast*, Clive was sexually impotent; and it was impotence that drove him wild. How could Sábit Jang be other than a phallic symbol and remain prime mover of an Eastern empire?

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FINIS THE FRENCH

Thomas Arthur, Comte de Lally, Baron de Tollendal (son of Sir Gerald O'Lally, an Irish Jacobite) was a soldier of fortune who had won his spurs with "Bonnie Prince Charlie" at Falkirk and his laurels with the patronage (in and out of bed) of Catherine the Great, who numbered him among her hundred lovers, and of the Marquise de Pompadour, King Louis' favorite. Lally commanded the French armada that had long been expected to challenge the triumph of

British arms; and Voltaire found in him "a stubborn fierceness of soul," peculiarly Irish and pre-eminently anti-English. Operating under the slogan of "*Ne des Anglais plus dans les Indes!*" (No more English in India!), Comtes de Lally and de Bussy captured and destroyed Fort St. David and Devikota in June of 1758.

An urgent appeal for help arrived at Fort William from Governor Pigot. Madras, he said, was in danger of siege by land and sea. "Send Pococke's Fleet, and if practicable, come Yourself with Troops." [1] In September, after much dispute, Governor Clive dispatched Lieutenant Colonel Francis Forde of the 39th Foot with twenty-five hundred troops and six guns to the relief of Madras. "All here are much alarm'd at so large a Detachment leaving this place," Clive informed Pigot, "and the Gentlemen of Council have made great Opposition to it. . . . Self-preservation seems to possess every Breast, without any Regard for the Future or the Good of the Service; . . . for I will not conceal from you that we are in no Condition to resist the French, should there be any Possibility of their paying us a Visit, during the Absence of our Troops. Our Effectives [soldiers fit for active duty] are not 280, and those the very Scum of the Earth; our Garrison is drain'd of Stores & Ammunition; . . . however, I do not think Victory depends so much upon Equallity of Numbers as Conduct & Resolution. . . . Remember, my Good Friend: Remember, All is at Stake in India, and Necessity hath no Law." [2]

Clive then wrote to Prime Minister Pitt, with whom he corresponded frequently: "I have so high an Opinion of the Gentlemen at Madrass, that I dare say they will make such a defence as will do Honour to our Nation & end in M. Lally's Disgrace." [3] (Prophetic words!)

Colonel Forde routed the French force of Hubert de Brienne, Comte de Conflans, in a pitched battle on December 7, capturing all his guns and supplies. "The French Commander had made his Boasts that he would make his Breakfast of us," Forde scrawled to Clive; "but we have been the Means of his losing his Breakfast, Luncheon & Dinner." [4]

[1] *Orme Papers.*
[2] *Pigot Papers.*
[3] *Chatham Papers.*
[4] *Orme Papers.*

However, Lally and Bussy had already seized Arcot and proclaimed Chandá Sáhib's son, Rizá Sáhib, Nevàb of the Carnatic. Muhammed 'Alí (whom Burke would style "a shadow, a dream, an incubus of oppression") was forced to flee to Madras with his bodyguard of two hundred horsemen. And Pigot had apprised Clive of Lally's rallying cry: "Better to die storming the Walls of Madrass than suffer Starvation behind those of Pondicherry!" [5] Clive responded: "I have heard, with some Surprize, that M. Lally has set himself down before Madrass. . . . I think he must be either mad or his Situation desperate." [6]

On November 29, Lally and Bussy laid siege to the city. Pigot and Lawrence resisted bravely; but on December 14, by sheer force of numbers, the French broke into the town and surrounded Fort St. George. Regardless, according to one observer, Lawrence and Pigot "determined from the Commencement of the Siege not to listen to any Terms of Capitulation; for the Loss of this Place would have drawn after it the entire Loss of the Country." [7] And while the Madras garrison held their own, Colonel Forde harassed Lally's communications and took possession of all French territory to the north.

On February 14, 1759, Comte de Lally gave up in disgust. His troops were drunken and mutinous and dispirited. Supply lines had been cut off, pay refused them for want of funds, malarial fever had taken its toll; and the sudden appearance of Rear-Admiral George Pococke's squadron in Madras Roads foretokened that the French fleet had been scattered. Lally's letter to Conflans, ordering a general retreat to Pondicherry, smacked of sour grapes: "I would rather go and command the Kaffirs of Madagascar than remain in this Sodom, which the fire of Heaven must destroy sooner or later, if that of the English should not." [8]

On March 8, from "Camp before Masulipatam," Colonel Forde imparted to Colonel Clive with his usual touch of Irish wit: "M. de Conflans was determined not to be taken Prisoner, unless by a Greyhound. Gramercy to English Doggedness, he is now Kennell'd up. Have had the agreeable News of the Moss-trooper [Lally] having

[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Pigot Papers.*
[7] *Orme Papers.*
[8] *Lettres de M. de Lally, etc.*

raised the Siege of Ft. St. George, by which we have gain'd immortal Honour." [9] Exactly one month later, the doughty colonel communicated that he had stormed Masulipatam and "had the Good Fortune to get Possession of it." [10]

When Nizám Selábat Jang Behádur learned that Lally and Bussy had retreated to Pondicherry, and that the English had occupied Masulipatam in triumph and received Conflans' surrender, he decided to save his title (and his skin) by making peace with the victors. A treaty was at once negotiated with Forde Sáhib, in which Selábat granted the Northern Sircars (a vast and valuable coastal territory between the Carnatic and Bengal) to the Company and agreed to never admit French troops in his domain. Muhammed 'Alí returned to Arcot and hacked off Rizá Sáhib's head (he later did the same to Selábat), and Colonel Forde returned to Calcutta for a hero's welcome. With the strategic port-fort of Masulipatam in British hands, with the submission of the Nizám of Hyderabad, and with the Northern Sircars now completing the great stretch of Company territory along the east coast of India, Pondicherry became the last vital outpost of King Louis' East Indian empire. Hopefully, the *impérialistes* had learned a lasting lesson in English enterprise.

Robert Clive, Provisional Governor of Calcutta, again set his heart on going home to England. *Home*. What a strange and remote word! A melancholy word. Clive had committed himself to a great task in strife-torn India, and he was not advantageously free to reap the fruits of Plassey in a footloose existence at home. Major Eyre Coote, "on sick leave" in London, was being wined and dined by the idol-worshiping snobocracy; but one day, soon, he would have to return to the land of his destiny. Coote could steal Clive's thunder, which he did. He could claim much of the glory, which he did. He could boast that he had boldly urged his hesitant, timorous chief on across the river. He could even assert that Clive had left the command to him, and lay hidden (drugged or asleep or dallying with some dancing-girl!) in the hunting lodge, and had not appeared till the battle was over.[11] But

[9] *Orme Papers.*
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Caraccioli; *Intrigues of a Nabob.*

sooner or later, Coote would again have to tarnish his gold lace and muddy his boots—and prove himself a "true Briton."

Rumors of Clive's "shrinking anxietude" at Plassey were believed in many quarters. Jan Stavorinus, Dutch author of *Voyages to the East Indies*, states that "General Clive . . . left the command to Colonel Coote, and remained hidden in his palanquin during the battle (out of the reach of shot) and did not make his appearance before the enemy were put to flight." Sir Henry Yule (*Hobson-Jobson*) comments: "This stupid and inaccurate writer says that several English officers who were present at the battle related this 'anecdote' to him. . . . Even to such a writer one would have supposed that Clive's mettle would be familiar." The anonymous author (doubtless Clive's secretary, John Walsh) of *Journal of the Expedition to Bengall*, in his detailed description of the battle, mentions that Clive left the scene only once: to change his sweat-soaked and rain-sodden clothes. So also Murád, Clive's valet, who says (*Táríkh-i-Mansúrí*) that "Sábit Jang took advantage of a lull in the fighting, and knowledge that the Neváb was withdrawing, to enter his chamber in the Dilkhusheh-Khaneh and put on dry clothes. When I fetched his new uniform, I saw him rubbing himself off with a towel; and his prickle becoming stiff thereby, he clutched it with a vigorous agitation that brought the semen [*Lit.*, 'made the water of discharge (seminal emission) pour'] quickly" (*va-kírish ezán rást míshud, bi-jumbish-i-qeví musht-girift kih áb-i-inzál ríkhteh bi-zúdí gerdánid*).

All accounts agree that Clive (temporarily) left the scene at the height of tension and anxiety; which, if Murád is to be trusted in his "scandalous" observations, exploded in a compulsive act of masturbation. This was not at all unusual under such nerve-stretching circumstances, for "self-abuse" under stress is a catharsis characteristic of such "hypersexual" personalities. Most interesting to note, in Murád's revelations, is Clive's use of a towel (apparently held tight around his erection) to frictionize the glans during manual manipulation of the shaft: perhaps a conscious or unconscious wish to revert to his former condition of phimosed uncircumcision, which may have provided more violent sensations agreeable to his neurotic nature. This wish, were it known, would have won him the phallus-conscious contempt of all fanatic Muslims. Therefore, Murád's disclosures smack of deri-

sion: as much as to say that Sábit Jang, despite his Islamization in the flesh, was still a masturbating Christian at heart. Murád's former admission of having "obliged" his master when women were wanting is likewise derogatory; for it casts Clive in the role of an exclusive passive (*mef'úl*, "the done"), who is deemed inferior and not fit to hold a candle to an active (*fá'il*, "the doer"). Though Clive certainly had homosexual experiences, which were quite stylish (*à l'anglaise!*) in the Age of Reason, there is no evidence of his having participated beyond reception—i.e., by passive fellatio—an attestation to predominant heterosexuality offset by autoerotism. To say that Clive was "bisexual" would be to presume that he indulged actively in "sodomitic" diversions, which neither Rae nor any of the nabob's worst enemies ever charged.

Clive notified "The Hon'ble George Pigot, Esq., and the Gentlemen of Council at Ft. St. George" that "I flatter myself the Court of Directors will think I have answer'd their Expectations & will approve of my returning to Europe, to enjoy the Fruits of a War which has been carried on for upwards of 11 Years almost without Intermission." [12] Writing to Laurence Sulivan, newly elected Chairman of the Court of Directors, Clive said: "The French are in a very bad Way & at the Point of Destruction; we have totally extirpated them out of Bengall. . . . If Ambition satisfy'd in its greatest Extent, and the Gratification of every Wish now center'd in my Native Country, be not Motives sufficient to induce me to return there, I know not what are." But Clive, duty-bound to Country and Company, was prevailed upon to remain in India another year—"with no other View in Nature than that of seeing the Co.'s Affairs in Bengall, important as they now are, put upon such a Footing as nothing but the Want of a timely Exertion from Home can destroy." [13]

Meantime, the fiery Mr. Richard Clive was making a public nuisance and private laughingstock of himself in defense and support of his controversial son. He went so far as to assure Mr. Pitt that "General" Clive, if given enough ships and soldiers, would rake up enough gold in Hindustan to pay off the National Debt: a national institution estimated at £100,000,000.

[12] *Fort St. George MS. Records.*
[13] *Orme Papers.*

"That's asking too much," the Premier replied indulgently. "Fifty millions would suffice."

"Lord, sir, consider: if your administration lasts, the National Debt will soon be *two hundred* millions!" [14]

Unable to reap the benefits of victory at home, Governor Clive resolved to aggrandize his fame and fortune in Bengal. The old dream of conquest and empire was destined to be realized by a master plan, a plan already half-effected. "I am fully persuaded that after the Battle of Plassey," he informed Mr. Sulivan, "I could have appropriated the whole Country to the Comp'y & preserved it afterwards with as much Ease as Meer Jaffer now does: thro' the Terror of the English Arms & their Influence." However, "The Reputation we have establish'd by the Force of our Arms makes it necessary for the Company's Advantage, as well as for the Benefit of the Trade in general, that we establish the like Reputation for Equity & Moderation." [15]

Clive added that the Grand Mughal had personally written him, by suggestion of his Grand Vizier, expressing his desire that "the great and glorious Sábit Jang" should rule Bengal instead of "that debauched and decrepit fool Ja'fer." [16] The emperor (and his premier) requested an annual tribute of only five million rupees for his supreme patronage. What a golden opportunity, with the powerful Nizám already in tow, to control all of Mughal India! Clive concluded to Sulivan:

> *Experience, not Conjecture or the Report of others, hath made me well-acquainted with the Genius of the People. . . . It is a Matter of great Indifference to them whom they serve. . . . I am persuaded You will believe I do not want to aggrandize the Co. at the Expence of all Equity & Justice. . . . But You, Sir, who have resided so long in India, are well-acquainted with the Nature & Dispositions of these Moosulmans. Gratitude they have none—bare Men of very narrow Conceptions—and have adopted a System of Politicks more peculiar in this Country than any other: viz., to attempt every thing by Treachery rather than Force. Under these Circumstances, may not so weak a Prince as Meer Jaffer be easily destroy'd or influenced by others to attempt destroying Us? What is it, then, can enable us to*

[14] *Malcolm's Anecdotes.*
[15] *Orme Papers.*
[16] *Ibid.*; Kerem 'Alí.

secure our present Acquisitions, or improve upon them, but such a Force as leaves nothing to the Power of Treachery & Ingratitude.[17]

Clive expected Sulivan's backing, and told him so; for when Sulivan had become a candidate in Bombay for the E.I.C. chairmanship, it was Clive who bought up a controlling interest in the Company and wielded his heavy influence to get Sulivan elected. "I offer'd my Interest & that of my Friends," he wrote, "because I am persuaded . . . the Company's Affairs could never be carried on to Advantage but under the Management of one or more of those Gentlemen who brought Home with them a just Knowledge of India acquired by many Years' Experience." [18] But he was to have cause to regret such interested patronage, for Sulivan's ideas of Company policy would run counter to those of his benefactor.

Clive then communicated with Prime Minister William Pitt, the most powerful man in Great Britain, urging him to annex Company territory to the British Empire through military support:

Moosulmans are so little influenced by Gratitude that, should he [Ja'fer] ever think it his Interest to break with us, the Obligations he owes us would prove no Restraint. . . . Moreover, he is advanced in Years; and his Son [Mírán] is so cruel & worthless a young Wretch, and so apparently an Enemy to the English, that it will be almost unsafe trusting him with the Succession. So small a Body as 2000 Europeans will secure us from any Apprehensions from either the one or the other, and in case of their daring to be troublesome, enable the Company to take the Sovereignty upon themselves. There will be the less Difficulty in bringing about such an Event, as the Natives themselves have no Attachment whatever to particular Princes; and as under the present Government they have no Security for their Lives or Properties, they would rejoice in so happy an Exchange as that of a mild for a despotick Gov't. . . . That this would be agreeable to the Mogull [emperor] can hardly be question'd; as it would be so much to his Interest to have these Countries under the Dominion of a Nation famed for their Good Faith, rather than in the Hands of People who (a long Experience hath convinced him) never will pay him his Proportion of the Revenues unless awed into it. . . . But so

[17] *Orme Papers.*
[18] *Ibid.*

large a Sovereignty may possibly be an Object too extensive for a Mercantile Company; and it is to be fear'd They are not of themselves able, without the Nation's Assistance, to maintain so wide a Dominion. . . . Now I leave You to judge whether an Income yearly of upwards of Two Millions Sterling, with the Provision of Three Provinces abounding in the most valueable Productions of Nature & of Art, be an Object deserving the Publick Attention; and whether it be worth the Nation's While to take the proper Measures to secure such an Acquisition.[19]

Pitt liked the idea—a British empire in India!—but of necessity dismissed it as "very practicable, but of a very nice [delicate] Nature." Moreover, according to John Walsh (Clive's spokesman at Whitehall), "He said the Difficulty of effecting the Affair [annexation] was not great, under such a Genius as Col. Clive; but the sustaining it was the Point. It was not probable he [Clive] would be succeeded by Persons equal to the Task." [20]

Provident foresight as well as personal ambition led Clive to the feeling that the E.I.C., by the very nature of its constitution, was not fit to maintain and administrate vast territories. Trade, being a national concern, should be put under national control. "Peace," Clive reminded the Court of Directors, "is the most valueable of all Blessings; but it must be made Sword in Hand in this Country, if we mean to preserve our Possessions. There is no Alternative; . . . for in a moderate State, tho' the Power might still be preserved, Corruption & frequent Revolutions must in the End overset us." [21] "Principle needs must be sacrificed to Expedience, if but temporarily, else England must lose her East India Trade to France. Evil, return'd unto Evil, riseth into Good. Remember: Necessity knows no Law except to conquer." [22]

Despite passive opposition from London, Governor Clive pursued his master plan by reconstructing old Fort William, strengthening the Company's volunteer force, and establishing the Bengal Native Army. "Tho' Matters are perfectly quiet at present," he cautioned the

[19] *Clive/Orme Papers; Chatham Papers* (Jan. 7, 1759).
[20] *Clive Papers.*
[21] *E.I.C. Records.*
[22] *Orme Journal.*

Court of Directors, " 'tis hard to say how long the Calm will last; and such is the Nature of this Country & Gov't, that the only certain Expedient of securing their Friendship is by keeping up such a Force as will render it unsafe for them to break with us." [23]

Chairman Sulivan's first act of antagonism was to appoint Colonel Coote commander-in-chief of the Company's troops in India. Age and ill-health had forced Lawrence's retirement; and Clive, who had superseded him nominally, was now in actuality outranked by a King's Regular. But the insult added to injury was that Colonel Forde, a Clive man, had been groomed and recommended for the position, only to be disregarded, despite his brilliant success. Clive smelled a rat, and wrote to Forde that "those leaden-headed Directors" had commissioned "that inferior Ass Coote. . . . However, we have taken care he shall not come to Bengall." [24]

He then penned to Pigot:

> *I know it has been a conceived Opinion among the Old Soldiers in England that our Exploits in India have been much of the same Nature as those of Cortez & Pizarro [i.e., "walkovers"], but your foiling such a Man as M. Lally & 2 of the oldest Regts. of France [Régiments de Lorraine & de Lally] will induce another Way of Thinking & add a fresh Lustre to all our former Victories. . . . I hope to God my Interest may not fail me in England. I tremble when I think of the fatal Consequences of such a mercenary Man as Coote commanding here. If You have any Regard for the Future, for God's Sake keep him on the Coast. There he can only get a little Drubbing, but here he may ruin the Co.'s Affairs for ever.*

Clive later repeated: "If you expect any Assistance or Supplys from hence, or think Bengall of any Importance to the Comp'y, for God's Sake keep Coote with you. Take but the Man, and You shall have the 1000 Men [requested reinforcements] into the Bargain." [25]

[23] *E.I.C. Records.*
[24] *Orme Papers.*
[25] *Pigot Papers.*

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* 34 *

THE GIFT

While Clive was laying the foundation of a future empire, Nevâb Ja'fer was actively intriguing with the Dutch, begging and bribing them to send him a troop fleet from Batavia for the expulsion of the English "aggressors." Ja'fer was about to get his wish, as once before, when suddenly he was again obliged to come crawling to Clive.

Early in 1759, Emperor 'Álemgír was murdered by his Grand Vizier, Muhammed Ghâzíyuddín Khán, who had invited the deposed Ahmed Sháh (King of Afghanistan) to return to Delhi as Grand Mughal. Ahmed Sháh returned, bringing with him an unholy terror. 'Alí Gawher Mu'azzem Khán Behádur Sháhzádeh, daredevil son of the Grand Mughal, had a brainstorm to grab Bengal for his twenty-first birthday, since Papa refused to give it to him. Recruiting a horde of freebooters, the prince charged out of Delhi. Shujá'uddawleh Khán, Nevâb of Oudh, threw in with him at once; and no persuasion was needed to enlist another predatory aspirant, Shujá'uddawleh's cousin and neighbor, Mír Muhammed Qúlí Khán of Allahabad. Since Shujá'uddawleh had long coveted Qúlí's pot of gold on the Ganges—*Alláhábád*, the Holy City of Allah—it was the hope of one vulture that his ravenous relative would now be diverted by bigger and better pickings.

The prince forwarded a flamboyant epistle to Clive stating: "It has come to my knowledge, O Daring in War, that you (Allah be praised!) are circumcised; and if this is so, be pleased to join us as a Muslim and aid us in ridding Bengal of that buggersome old leech, Ja'fer 'Alí Khán." [1] Following that invitation came an appeal from the prince's troubled sire, Ahmed Sháh, invoking Clive's honorary rank in the imperial army and imploring him to ignore the advances

[1] *Tárikh-i-Mansúrí.*

of a rebellious son. Urgent entreaties from Nevâb Ja'fer came daily, petitioning Clive's allegiance and assistance against a mutual menace. Clive had no logical choice but to stand behind the lesser of two evils, his wayward protégé. He answered the prince: "If to be a Muslim is to be circumcised, then I confess to being a Muslim. As a Muslim, you ask me to join you. By this do you mean that Nevâb Ja'fer is not a Muslim? The Qurán dictates holy war against all uncircumcised unbelievers. It is my knowledge that Nevâb Ja'fer is circumcised, therefore a Muslim; and since the Qurán also dictates the brotherhood of true believers, it would be an act of hypocrisy and infidelity for me to join you or offer you any aid whatever. Allah have mercy on you!" [2]

It was no surprise to Clive that Jagat Séth and Rájá Ráidulábh had secretly invited the Mughal prince to invade Bengal and oust the power-mad incompetent who had alienated his Hindu subjects by nepotism and greed. "They now remembered Sirájuddawleh," writes historian Ghulám Husayn, "and remembered him with shame and regret." Clive warned Jagat and Ráidulábh against the disastrous folly of such an invitation, as Ahmed Sháh's son was nothing but an incorrigible marauder. When his advice was politely ignored, Councilor J. Z. Holwell wrote: "A Time may come when they may stand in Need of the Company's Protection, in which Case they may be assured they shall be left to Satan to be buffetted." [3]

Luke Scrafton and Warren Hastings, Clive's troubleshooters at Murshidabad, were in an unenviable position. "Let the Nabob be ever so bad," Hastings advised Clive, "we are bound, if not in Justice, in Honour & Policy to support him thro' these Troubles. That he is a Usurper is certain, and one of our making, but we must make a Virtue of Necessity." [4] Clive pledged his allegiance to Ja'fer, adding: "Do not even think of coming to any terms with the Emperor's son, but take the necessary measures to defend your capital to the last." [5]

Ja'fer, fearful of foul play, sought to buy off the prince. Clive, ahead of the game, foiled him with this response:

[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Orme Papers.*
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Tárikh-i-Mansúrí.*

If you do this, you will have Shujá'uddawleh, the Marathas, and many more come from all parts to bully you out of money till you have none left in your treasury. Besides, you will be furnishing the Emperor's son with the means to raise forces for the conquest of your country. What will be said if the great Ja'fer 'Alí Khán, Viceroy of Bengal and commander of sixty thousand troops, should offer money to a beardless boy who has scarcely a soldier with him? I beg Your Excellency will rely on the fidelity of the English, and of those troops which are attached to you.[6]

The prince again wrote to Clive and sent a delegation of phony dignitaries, offering him "provinces upon provinces, with whatever your heart may desire" as the price of his support. Clive replied curtly that he was duty-bound to defend Ja'fer and honor-bound not to be bribed, adding that "It is not the custom of the English nation to be guilty of insincerity and dishonesty." [7]

The crown prince retorted: "It will be well for you, O most high-and-mighty protector of the great, to pay a due obedience to my desire and make it your business to pay your respects to me like a faithful servant, which will be great and good for you; whereupon, by the blessing of Allah, you will stand high in my favor." [8]

Clive's reply was disconcerting: "It gives me great concern to find that this country must become a scene of troubles. I beg leave to inform you that since I have not received any orders (either from the Emperor or the Premier) relative to assisting you as one of your father's special deputies, I cannot pay that due regard to Your Highness' desires which I might otherwise wish to do." [9] Then he sent Ja'fer a letter designed to shake him out of his fool's paradise: "The Emperor's son made me offers of provinces upon provinces, with whatever my heart could desire; but could he give (as well as offer) me the whole empire of Hindustan, it would have no weight with the English. It is the custom of the English to treat the persons of ambassadors as sacred, and I told the prince's agents as much: but

[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*

at the same time warned them never to come near me again; for if they did, I would take their heads for their pains." [10]

Racing to Murshidabad, Clive reproached Ja'fer 'Alí in person for his distrust and ordered him to get his troops under arms. Seated in the howdah of a swift elephant, the kingmaker and the pawn pushed northward with twenty thousand horsemen. But the prince's escapade had already ended in debacle. A rumor planted by Clive's agents that his cousin's secret agents had seized Allahabad led Qúlí Khán to march his army back to oust the imaginary usurpers. And when Shujá'uddawleh heard (from the same source) that his rapacious relative's undercover men were about to take over Lucknow, his capital, he too made a hasty departure.

Clive understood that "cousin," to one of Afghan origin, meant the same as "enemy" or "rival"; and that the blood feuds over property rights in Afghanistan and other northern lands carried over into India. As Allah willed, while the Nevàb of Oudh and the Emir of Allahabad were about to part, one was attacked by the other. Vastly outnumbered, Muhammed Qúlí Khán was captured and put to death by impalement *per rectum*. Thus Shujá'uddawleh seized Allahabad after all!

The boy adventurer and his band of three hundred cutthroats ("famished vultures," Ghulám Husayn called them) were left in the lurch. "We have now dispersed all his Followers," Clive wrote to Forde on April 27; "and he is himself in great Distress, wandering about with a Handful of Men, not knowing whom to trust to." [11] Having come to his senses, the prince slunk back to Delhi. These events in which his potential enemies destroyed themselves augmented Clive's prestige as a man of destiny. The Grand Mughal acclaimed him as *mír-i-'alá* (sublime chieftain), his Grand Vizier praised Clive as *emín 'alí-o-'azím* (glorious and great protector), and both luminaries bade Clive to establish a Company factory in Delhi as a reward for his services.[12]

The crown prince, impoverished by his venture, appealed to Clive as a prodigal son returned and repentant. Clive sent him a lakh of rupees out of his own pocket, expecting that charity might someday

[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Orme Papers.*
[12] Husayn Khán; Kerem 'Alí; *Tárikh-i-Mansúrí.*

be rewarded, and wrote the following: "I had received repeated orders from the Premier, and even from your father the Emperor, not only to oppose Your Highness but even to lay hold of your person. Had I assisted Your Highness in any respect, it would have been attended with the ruin of this country. It is better that *one* should suffer, however great, than that many thousands should be made unhappy. I have only to recommend Your Highness to the Almighty's protection, and to offer this gift of a lakh as a token of my esteem." [13] This generous act was to pay off handsomely in later years, when the Mughal Empire became a part of the British Empire.

Neváb Ja'fer thanked his "most exalted protector" for a bloodless victory, and asked Clive how he might repay him for his service. Clive answered: "Grant me a large piece of land that will yield an untaxed annual income of one million rupees."

The Neváb started, then bowed with a subtle smile. "As you wish, Lord Sahib!" *You greedy pig* (*tú khúg-nafseh*), he seemed to be thinking.[14] But Clive's conscience was clear. Ja'fer was a notorious skinflint, and it pained him to contemplate bestowing the customary and obligatory *jágír-nazr* or "rent-free land grant" for meritorious services rendered. A *jágír* was the acknowledged complement of an honorific title from the Mughal emperor, who had made Clive one of the *umerá* or pillars of empire, therefore worthy of joining the privileged landocracy (*jágírdárí*). Having certainly earned it, Clive had no qualms about demanding it.

But as Ja'fer was a man of promises, not performance, no land grant was forthcoming in the expected time. Consequently, Clive put the squeeze on this artful dodger through his chief financier, Jagat Séth. "I always understood," he wrote to the Great Banker, "that when you had procured me official authorization for the royal rank of *Túmándár* [Holder of Ten Thousand Horse], with the title of *Zábitul-Mulk Násiruddawleh* [Master-Defender of Empire], that the Neváb would have favored me with a *jágír* equal to the rank I received by imperial decree; but to this day I have not heard a word from him concerning it. As there is a strong friendship existing between you and me, I beg leave to give you the trouble to apply to the Neváb concerning this affair: that I may have a *jágír* equal to my

[13] *Ibid.*
[14] *Ibid.*

rank, with a commission of *Jágírdár* [Freeholder] signed and sealed by the Mughal emperor." [15] Jagat applied pressure and Clive's enterprising envoy at Murshidabad, Mr. Warren Hastings, was soon able to report that "the Nabob expresses the most gratefull Sense of the Services which You have perform'd for him, and declared to me his Resolution to use every Means in his Power to procure an Order from the [Mughal] Court for your Jagheer, being ashamed that you should do so much for him without the Prospect of reaping any Advantage to yourself by it." [16]

Clive got his *jágír*, a rich tract of land south of Calcutta; but little did he then imagine, as a "nabob" earning £50,000 a year therefrom, what a headache this prize was to prove. *Mighty men shall be mightily tormented.* One may ask why. Well, the main reason was that the Company (not the Neváb) lost £50,000 a year to its most independently illustrious servant. Clive's *jágír*, the so-called Twenty-Four Pergunnahs or fertile districts adjoining Calcutta, happened to be the entire territorial claim of the E.I.C. in Bengal! In other words, Ja'fer had transferred to a servant the property of his masters; "in Consequence of which," the Calcutta Council apprized the Court of Directors, "we have paid to Col. Clive what was before paid the Nabob, and shall continue in Future to account with him instead of the [Bengali] Government." [17] As extraordinary as this was, the London bigwigs raised no immediate objection to a transaction that made Robert Clive the feudal superior of his employers and chief proprietor of the Company; for this singular position seemed preferable to the feudal superiority of a "rascally Moor" over the Company's territory. At least they could trust and—hopefully—control Clive. As Chairman Sulivan reasoned, " 'Twill be simpler and easier to cease paying the rent to Clive than to the Nabob!" [18]

[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Clive Papers.*
[17] *E.I.C. Records*
[18] *Intrigues of a Nabob.*

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FINIS THE DUTCH

August, 1759. Nevâb Ja'fer reaped where he had sown. A Dutch warship, loaded with Malayan sepoys from Batavia, slipped up the Hooghly to Chinsurah. Governor Clive watched and waited. The "Butterboxes" were making ambitious preparations to challenge British supremacy in Bengal. England and Holland were allies in Europe; but in the East Indies, where free-acting companies of adventurers roved, it was every man for himself. Forwarding official protests to the Nevâb and the Dutch governor, Clive began his own preparations. Clive's protests were ignored, as expected. No matter. He was ready for any emergency.

In October, a seven-transport flotilla with over fifteen hundred Dutch regulars and Malayan sepoys landed at Chinsurah. Ja'fer welcomed them "in a most gracious Manner, more like Friends & Allys than Enemies to him & his Country." [1] The Dutch lost little time, with the Nevâb's help, in enlisting native recruits. Warren Hastings wrote from Murshidabad: "Every Day's Transactions confirm me more & more in the Opinion that the Nabob is acting a treacherous Part with you." [2] Clive now took action. He ordered Colonel Forde to make a demonstration against Chinsurah and Admiral Pococke to challenge the Dutch squadron. The Dutch governor (Mijnheer Alfred Bisdom) sent Clive an indignant response. "Our Settlement was establisht here Long before ye English and other Nations enter'd this Kingdom," he wrote; "therefore, We deliver You this Ultimatum to surrender Monopolitick Predomination or suffer ye necessary Consequences." [3]

[1] *Clive Papers.*
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Orme Papers.*

"I believe the Mynheers are damnably at a Loss how to act upon this Occasion," Forde communicated to Clive. "If you send me an Order of Council, I can attack the Dutch with a fair Prospect of destroying them." [4] Clive was seated at a card table with several Council members when this note was handed to him late in the evening of November 23. He picked up a pencil and scrawled at the bottom:

> *Dear Forde,*
> *Fight 'em Immediately; I will send You an Order of Council tomorrow.*
>
> Clive [5]

"Aren't you running a devilish risk?" William Watts remarked.

Clive snorted. "Damme! A public man may occasionally be called upon to act with a halter round his neck, may he not?" [6]

Watts was right. Clive was running a twofold risk, both public and private. He had opened hostilities against a nation with which England was at peace; and he had, before the embroilment, remitted £180,000 to London by bills of exchange on the Dutch Company. According to attorney William Smith King, Clive's agents had "ye Devil of a Time" getting them cashed. But ("after our undergoing for more than a Year ye utmost Anxiety & Trouble from their most scandallous & rascally Behaviour, and from our Fears that they would not pay them at all unless compell'd thereto by a Suit-at-Law") the Dutch finally paid. However, "ye knavish Hands" withheld 6 per cent as commission.[7]

Fifteen hundred Dutch troops opposed Forde's 1200. In less than half an hour, in a clash that Clive later described as "short, bloody & decisive," the English had routed the Dutch, killing 320 and capturing 550. Pococke, on the Hooghly, totally destroyed the Dutch squadron which had harassed British shipping and ravaged two depots. Thus on November 25 the "Butterboxes" went the way of the "Frog-eaters" in Bengal. As for Nevâb Ja'fer, he humbled himself before Clive and begged his forgiveness. "I was a fool," he said, "to distrust you; a rogue to exploit you."

[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Watts Journal.*
[7] *Clive Papers.*

Clive smiled. "Thou little valiant, great in villainy! Thou art falser than vows made in wine, but Allah judge between me and thee." [8]

Acknowledging themselves as aggressors, and agreeing to pay all costs and damages, the Dutch surrendered their enterprise to English supervision. Justifying his bold stroke to the Court of Directors, Clive wrote: "I was sensible how very critical our Situation was at the time, and I risqued Life & Fortune in taking it upon myself to commence Hostilities against a Nation with whom we were at Peace; but I knew the Fate of Bengall & of the Comp'y depended upon it, and therefore I ran that Risque." In noting that £180,000 of his private fortune was in the hands of the Dutch Company, he explained that the Calcutta treasury "was so full, in consequence of our Successes, that the Council declined giving any Bills in my Favour; and I was reduced to the Necessity of sending my Fortune Home by Bills upon the Dutch." He added: "I flatter myself that I have put Bengall out of all Danger but that of Venality & Corruption." [9] Now, at long last, the Great Nabob would go home to England.

[8] Kerem 'Alí; *Watts Journal.*
[9] *E.I.C. Records.*

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THE GREAT NABOB

Warren Hastings, aged twenty-seven, had become Robert Clive's envoy to the court of Murshidabad by no mere chance. Entering the Company's service at eighteen, this lanky youth with effeminate but intellectual features was a writer at the Cossimbazar factory when Sirájuddawleh seized it in '56. Forcibly circumcised in company with his fellow clerks and factor, Mr. Watts, Hastings then made a daring escape to Fulta, where he married the young widow of a Black Hole victim. Joining Clive's expedition as a civilian volunteer, Hastings served with distinction in the campaign of '57. Of scholarly bent, the future statesman had been Cowper's chum at Westminster College; and when Clive learned of his fluency in Hindustani and the cere-

monial tongue, Persian, he appointed Hastings as resident or "ambassador extraordinary" when Watts retired to his old Council duties.

Hastings admired Clive and it was not sycophancy that impelled him to write: "As . . . the Nabob is but of an irresolute & unsettled Temper, I don't think it possible that he can hold out against the united Influence of so many evil Counsellors as will be perpetually instilling into his Mind the Necessity of reducing the English Power. . . . As there is no body to succeed You with the same Influence & other Advantages which you possess, nothing but a large Military Force will secure our Privileges from being encroach'd upon as soon as you quit the Country." [1]

Clive replied: "What you write me about the Young Nabob [Mírán Bég, whose ambitious designs were now being aimed against his own father] does not at all surprize me; it was what I always expected. Meer Jaffer's Days of Folly are without Number; and he had, long before this, slept with his Ancestors if the Dread of our Power & Resentment had not been his only Security. Sooner or later, I am persuaded, that worthless young Dog will attempt his Father's Overthrow. How often have I advized the Old Fool against putting too much Power into the Hands of his nearest Relations!" [2]

The frustrations aroused in Ja'fer and Mírán by Clive's defeat of the Dutch were let loose upon the *begums* or royal wives of 'Alíverdí and Sirájuddawleh. For conspiring against "the Old Fool" and "that worthless young Dog," Lutfunnisá and a number of noblewomen were tied up in sacks and tossed into the Hooghly like so many cats. Mírán engineered the mass murder, but Ja'fer took the blame. "These are the Acts of the Tyger we are supporting & fighting for!" Dr. Holwell penned indignantly to Mr. Hastings, who replied: "I have hitherto been generally an Advocate for the Nabob, whose Extortions & Oppressions I imputed to the Necessity of the Times & Want of Oeconomy in his Revenues; but, if this Charge against him be true, no Argument can excuse or palliate so atrocious & complicated a Villainy, nor (forgive me, Sir, if I add) our supporting such a Tyrant." [3]

[1] *Orme Papers.*
[2] *Hastings Papers.*
[3] *Ibid.; Orme Papers.*

Luke Scrafton, Hastings' colleague, wrote to Clive: "The Nabob has quite forgot the humble Meer Jaffer; Roydoolob seldom goes near him, his Son never, and his Officers are (more than Half of them) disgusted; in short, as he conducts himself at present, I see little Probability of his wearing his Head long. I know not which to admire most: his Folly or his Treachery. I could not have believed him such a bad Man as I find him." He added: "I clearly comprehend the Political Disease of the Nabob's Affairs, but it is You only that can apply the Remedy." [4] A flattering remark, but scarcely comforting. The only immediate antidote to Ja'fer's ailment seemed to be the axe —or, more charitably, the principle of fear. "The Moors are bound by no Ties of Gratitude," Clive concluded, "always ripe are they for a Change whenever there is the smallest Prospect of Success; and every Day's Experience convinces me that Moosulmans will remain firm to their Engagements no longer than while they are actuated by Principles of Fear." [5]

Nevâb Ja'fer paid two ceremonial visits (in '58 and '59) to Calcutta, during which Scrafton Sâhib was obliged to serve as his guide. "Thank God, His Excellency is at last gone!" he confessed to Hastings. "He has led me a Hell of a Life here, by the constant Attendance I have been obliged to pay to him & his Wenches." [6] Speaking of Ja'fer's wenches, Hastings notified Clive that "Meeran [Mírán] has taken a Fancy to one of his Father's Wives, who will 'milk' him of the Nabob's Secrets if we will agree to pay her the Sum of 500 Rupees, with which she may purchase a Divorce & leave the City." [7]

Clive, though amused, sent a serious reply: "I do not think it right that such Artifices should be put in Practice by us. I would leave all Trickery to the Hindoos & Moosulmans, to whom it is natural, being convinced that the Reputation we have in this Country is owing (among other Causes) to the Ingenuity & Plain-dealing for which we are distinguish'd." [8] Secretly, however, Clive forwarded the five hundred rupees ("to buy her Freedom from an Old Dog's Embraces")

[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Hastings Papers.*
[7] *Watts Journal* (insert).
[8] *Hastings Papers.*

with no strings attached.[9] Meanwhile, Mr. Hastings continued to write of "repeated Instances of the Nabob's irresolute & fickle Temper," and the sad fact that he was fast growing salaciously senile.[10] In the words of historian Tapanmohan Chatterji: "Meer Jafar drugged himself with hemp and opium all day, and surrounded by a gang of snivelling catamites and simpering harlots, continued to govern Bengal."

Envious (even jealous) of Governor Clive's power and independence, Chairman Sulivan and the Court of Directors attempted to keep a tight rein on him. But as Clive kept kicking over the traces, Sulivan & Company sent him a scathing communiqué, reprimanding him for his "Abuse of Authority" and "unauthorized Accumulation of Wealth." Clive was privately branded a "fortune-hunter," an "arrogator," and a "mogul," the epithet for an imperious "nabob." Publicly they asserted: "We can not avoid remarking that You seem so thoroughly possess'd with Military Ideas as to forget your Employers are Merchants, and Trade their principal Object." The criticism was extended to the Calcutta Council, including accusations of "illicit Trade" and a "Chain of Irregularities, Omissions, and Deviations from our Interest. . . . You seem to have acted like Men divested of your Understanding." [11]

True, Clive's Calcutta associates on the Council had done extremely well for themselves. Watts and Holwell were now independently rich. They had willingly benefited by the Great Nabob's "Abuse of Authority," and they entertained no intentions of yielding their fortunes to the "Autocrat of India House" and the "Twenty-Four Kings of Leadenhall Street." A letter of protest prepared by Clive and signed by his defenders (the Select Committee of Holwell, Watts, Sumner, and M'Guire), was dispatched to London. It damned "the unprovoked & general Asperity" of the rebuke as "most unworthy yourselves & us," attributing it to "the Breath of Scandal join'd to private Pique or private & personal Attachments." [12]

"The Nabob ask'd me if I thought you could be persuaded to put off your Design of returning to Europe, of which I gave him but little

[9] *Watts Journal.*
[10] *Orme Papers.*
[11] *Bengal MS. Records.*
[12] *E.I.C. Records.*

Hope." So Hastings imparted to Clive.[13] Having failed to find a stronger ally than the English, a better friend than Clive, Ja'fer now worried over Clive's departure; which also troubled the Europeans of Calcutta, who begged him to postpone his departure for another season.[14]

Clive replied that "Tho' the Ill-treatment I received from the Court of Directors in their last Despatch had fully determined me to resign the Service of the Comp'y, yet I could waive all personal Considerations (and, without Hesitation, comply with your Request) did the State of your Affairs really require my making such a Sacrifice to you. . . . Proper Measures may be taken at Home for the better Security of this valueable Settlement, to promote which you may depend upon my exerting my utmost Interests; and I may perhaps be able to serve you more effectually than by my continuing here." [15]

February 21, 1760. Robert Clive took ship to England. As a native historian (Saiyed Ghulám Husayn Khán) described the moment, "It appeared as if the soul was departing from the body of the government of Bengal." Clive left the reins of government in John Holwell's able hands. When the swift vessel bearing him homeward reached the mouth of the Hooghly, a courier climbed aboard with glad tidings. At Vandivash, about fifty miles northwest of Pondicherry, Colonel Eyre Coote had decisively defeated (on January 22) the French forces of Comtes de Lally and de Bussy. A year later, with the fall of Pondicherry, France was all but driven out of India. Lally was court-martialed and beheaded, his last words: I die without shame.[16] Voltaire, who had mocked the English for shooting one admiral (Byng) in order to encourage the others, now cited the French for rewarding a national hero with "the sword of justice" (*glaive de la justice*). Bussy, captured at Vandivash, was later released to return home in disgrace.

In a decade, Madras and Calcutta had risen from mere trading stations to virtual capitals of two great provinces; and the conquest of these vast territories had been achieved by mere handfuls of men, and by a demonstration of enterprise scarcely rivaled in the history of the world. Clive's vision of empire, of a consolidation of British

[13] *Clive Papers.*
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] Lally, Comte de: *Mémoires.*

power from Cape Comorin to the Ganges Valley, was at last realized. In his words: "We have now succeeded in doing to the French, both in India and America [*re* Wolfe's tragic victory at Quebec], what the French had set upon doing to us." [17]

And "As to the Name of Clive, the Colonel has made it so famous that it is the only Comfort I have in still being a Clive. . . . He is in the highest Esteem in this Part of the World, and does Honour to all his Relations." Thus penned Miss Sarah Clive, a cousin of the Great Nabob.[18]

[17] *Sykes Journal.*
[18] *Clive Papers.*

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* 37 *

HERO'S HOMECOMING

Clive's second homecoming outshone his first in enthusiasm and excitement. Then, the hero of the day was a "heaven-born soldier" who had brought the indomitable Dupleix to his knees. Now he was acclaimed for his statesmanship as well, a statesmanship that had brought Mughal India into the British Empire. When George II was asked facetiously by Prime Minister Pitt whether a young Englishman should join the Prussian Army of Frederick the Great in order to learn the military art, His Britannic Majesty blurted: "*Pshaw!* What can he learn there? If he wants to learn the art of war, let him go to Clive!"

Nearly twenty years before, while riding past the Tower of London, the King had halted momentarily to laugh at a husky little adolescent wearing a wig that was ten years too big and fancy for him. "By God," George had remarked to his son, William Augustus, "that boy is a pocket Don Quixote!" [1] Clive had hated perukes ever since. When welcomed in private audience, he reminded His Majesty of that incident and told what an effect it had had upon his pride.

[1] *Malcolm's Anecdotes.*

"Gen'l Clive is arrived," wrote Horace Walpole, "all over Estates & Diamonds." Indeed, " 'Tis supposed ye Gen'l can realize £1,200,000 in Cash, Bills & Jewells; that his Lady hath a Casquet of Jewells which are estimated at least at £200,000; so that he may, with Propriety, be said to be ye richest Subject in ye 3 Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland." [2]

The word "nabob," applied to one who was deemed Britain's wealthiest citizen, then took on its present sense of a man possessing fabulous wealth. Clive's admitted income was no less than £50,000 a year; but other sources made him worth well over a "cool million" in money alone, to say nothing of property. What was apparently "not to be had for love or money" was actually within Clive's power alone to procure. When (for example) the cost of living soared Walpole quipped, "a Pint of Milk will not be sold under a Diamond & no body can keep a Cow but my Lord Clive." [3]

When Hanoverian George III (who "ought never to have occurred") was proclaiming from the throne, "I glory in the name of Briton," Clive was flat on his back with remittent fever and nervous prostration. The strain of his hectic life was now telling on him. He was afflicted with hallucinations and agonizing debility. For a year he lay in a state of collapse, raving in fits of recurrent delirium that lasted for days. His note to Pigot is telling: "I was so ill & out of my Wits [with malarial horrors], that for 12 Months it was difficult to pronounce whether I was to live or die. In so dreadfull a Situation I could not think much of India, or indeed of any thing else but Death." [4] Among the many "greats" who visited him during his convalescence was Sam Johnson, who asked him: "Are you sick or are you sullen? I inherited a vile melancholy from my father, which has made me mad all my life." Clive answered: "Now, sir, I hold with Aristotle that no excellent soul is exempt from a mixture of madness." [5]

Again up and about, Clive reverted to his former aspirations to enter Parliament, but now in the House of Lords—an honor due him, he asserted, since he had received the coveted Order of the Bath.

[2] *Walpole Letters.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Pigot Papers.*
[5] *Malcolm's Anecdotes.*

But George III withheld an English title and Clive was lucky, after months of angling, to hook an Irish peerage. He purchased an Irish estate named "Ballykilty" which he changed to "Plassey," and became Robert Lord Clive, C.B., Baron of Plassey in the Kingdom of Ireland.

Emblazoned with the red ribbon and silver medallion of his Commandership of the Bath, token of peerage and royal favor, Lord Clive sat for the traditional portrait that must dominate the manorhouse drawing room. It was painted by no other than Thomas Gainsborough. Writing to Orme at Madras, Clive expressed his regret at having acquired a baronship through the self-interested patronage of Lord Bute and the Duke of Newcastle. "If less had been said, I should have been less ambitious & consequently less unhappy." But he added in the same letter: "If Health had not deserted me on my Arrival in England, in all Probability I had been an English Peer instead of an Irish one. I know I could have bought the Title (which is usual), but That I was above; and the Honours I have obtain'd are free & volluntary. My Wishes [for a seat in Parliament] may hereafter be accomplish'd." [6] He wrote much the same to Pigot: "I know I could have bought the Title, but I scorn to obtain for Money that which I believe I have earn'd. My only Force of Persuasion was others' Knowledge of my vast personal Wealth. Now, the Fates willing, I shall gain my Ends for good & all." [7]

During Clive's illness, enemies set to work against him. Company Chairman Laurence Sulivan, insulted by that damnatory letter from the "Clive Clique," promptly removed Dr. Holwell ("the Nabob's Lacquey") as provisional governor and replaced him with one Henry Vansittart, Sulivan's flunky. Every Council member who had signed or had had a hand in that letter, including Holwell and Watts, was summarily and officially dismissed from the service (although, unofficially, they had long since resigned) without as much as a "thank-you"; and orders were then issued that "they be not permitted, on any Consideration, to continue in India." [8]

Save for Clive, Sulivan's vengeance was complete; but he had a weapon, the knowledge of the chief source of Clive's wealth, his

[6] *Orme Papers.*
[7] *Pigot Papers.*
[8] *Bengal MS. Records.*

jágír. Through Sulivan's connivance, Vansittart would endeavor to ruin Clive by pressuring Neváb Ja'fer into confiscating or "reclaiming by annexation" that great stretch of precious land. Sequestration would be justified on grounds of "the right of eminent domain."

"It is very natural to think," Clive informed Pigot, "the Interest of a dying Man could not be very great. Under these Circumstances, I had Hints given me that either some Attempts would be made upon my Jagheer or some Proposal made for giving it up to the Co. after a certain time: on a Supposition, perhaps, that I had not long to live." [9]

"There was, however, another secret Motive to this violent & unjust Measure," wrote Clive's private secretary, Henry Strachey.

> *It happen'd that Lord Clive & his Parliamentary Friends had, for some time, acted in Opposition to the Court Party [the King's Friends]; and in this Country, where Ministers maintain their Power by the inflicting of Punishments as well as by the Distribution of Rewards, it is no wonder that they should endeavour to weary out by Oppression those whom they can not allure by Corruption. The Chairman of the East India Company [Laurence Sulivan] was known to be at Enmity with Lord Clive. Him, therefore, they [the autocrats] consider'd as the aptest Instrument with which the Noble Lord might be tortured into a Change of Political Conduct; and the Plan of Mutual Resentment was no sooner resolved upon than executed.*[10]

On March 16, Sulivan notified Colonel Eyre Coote:

> *The Behaviour of the then Bengall Gentlemen to You being similar to their Treatment of their Masters, it puts an End to all Reasoning; still, your Detention at Madrass [which resulted in the decisive victory at Vandivash] verifyes that Reflexion of Pope upon Human Foresight ("Whatever is, is best") and how much We are indebted to Providence for this Disobedience to our Orders [by Clive and Pigot, in not allowing Coote to enter Bengal]. . . . Our People at Madrass, We find, are hot-headed; but . . . I can smother their Rebukes. But the ungratefull Wretches, late of Bengall, have hurt my Temper. . . . As I conclude you are now at Bengall, be well with Vansittart, I beg.*

[9] *Pigot Papers.*
[10] *Strachey Papers.*

From his Character he is high in my Esteem, and from his Virtues & Abilitys I expect that lawless Settlement of Calcutta will be reform'd to Decency & Order.[11]

To Sulivan, Stringer Lawrence was "the greatest Military Officer that ever was in Asia." [12] Clive, if he merited anything in Sulivan's estimation, merited only financial ruin at the hands of those who owed him their good fortune. He chose Harry Vansittart, a playboy in his late twenties, to do the dirty work. He, like Sulivan and Colonel Coote, was a secret member of the infamous Hell-Fire Club or "Mad Monks of Medmenham Abbey," an inner circle of reckless young men who practiced a Satanist cult in the abandoned abbey, Black Masses or Sabbats, of which promiscuous copulation was the chief rite. A priapic statue, clutching a monstrous phallus, bore the legend *Peni tento, non paenitenti* (Pricks erect, without regret). And over the threshold were inscribed these classic lines: *Omne Animal post Coitum triste est, praeter Gallum Gallinaceum et Sacerdotem gratis fornicantem* (After coition all creatures are sad, except the barnyard cock and the free-fornicating priest). Among those who participated in the Black Mass were such notorious debauchees as Lord Sandwich and John Wilkes, Sir Francis Dashwood (15th Baron le Despencer, its politicking founder), and Baron Melcombe (George Bubb Dodington, a political prostitute but a patron of the arts). Poet Laureate William Whitehead was joined by poet and satirist Charles Churchill, son of a Westminster curate and himself an ordained priest. "Whilest Womanhood, in Habit of a Nun, at Medmenham lies by backward Monks undone," Churchill scribbled respectable obscenities:

Keep up Appearances: there lies the Test;
The World will give thee Credit for the rest.
Outward be fair, however foul within;
Sin if thou wilt, but then in Secret sin.

William Douglas, 3rd Earl of March and 4th Duke of Queensbury, was a lecher who developed English horse-racing and was affectionately dubbed "Old Q," euphemistically abbreviatory for "Old Quim-Sticker." He was a "monk" in company with the 2nd Earl of Orford,

[11] *Orme Papers.*
[12] *Ibid.*

Walpole's elder brother Tom, who performed as "Beelzebub" in the Satanist ceremonial. Other diabolists included such worthies as Old Q's chaplain, the Reverend John Kidgell, a confirmed homosexual; Robert Lloyd, poet and protégé of Churchill; and Thomas Potter, pornographer scion of ex-Archbishop of Canterbury John Potter, who had won notoriety not only by his slanderous salacity but by his vote-rigging in behalf of Clive and his affair with the spouse of the Most Reverend Bishop William Warburton, who once remarked to Sandwich that "Orthodoxy is my doxy."

Dashwood's "Mad Monks," first congregated about 1755, was a club Clive had joined on his first visit home: not because he hated Roman Catholics, whose rites the Satanists obscenely parodied, but because its members were politically influential and advantageously venal. Also, it offered him an opportunity of satisfying his voracious venereal appetite, which one devoted wife apparently could not sate. Clive's Rabelaisian *nom de foutrerie* was "Friar Turk," in allusion to his Eastern connections and characteristics. However, when Dashwood and Dodington discovered he was circumcised, they insisted on calling him "Friar Clipcock" or just plain "Clip," which obliged Clive (*en point d'honneur*) "to hand in his Cundums, as 'twere." [13]

Vansittart, like Wilkes, had allegedly abandoned his wife only to take her again as a whore, prompting this ditty:

> *Why as Mistress doth she tickle,*
> *Who as Good-wife never pleas'd?*
> *Do you have a fickle Prickle*
> *Addicted, Sir, to being teas'd?* [14]

And Vansittart, purportedly a perverted rake who was wont to be masturbated and fellated by boys and girls in the alleys of the Black Town, had established a sinister association with Ja'fer's ambitious son Mírán; and though the Neváb now turned a deaf ear to the plotted defiance of Clive, a danger he dared not court again, Prince Mírán worked in collusion with Vansittart Sáhib to sway the *durbar* nobles against his father's will. "Make me Viceroy of Bengall," he

[13] *Intrigues of a Nabob; Malcolm's Anecdotes;* Caraccioli; Wilkes, John: *Papers* (among several other contemporary sources, Johnstone's *Chrysal* devotes many pages to the Hell-Fire Club).

[14] *Watts Journal.*

said, "and I will destroy Clive for you." [15] The new governor nodded and smiled.

"If you prefer Young Women & Whores to Old Women & Wives, come to Bath!" [16] Before election time, the Clives vacationed at Bath, that licentiously fashionable "watering-place" frequented for its warm mineral springs (the *aqua solis* or "sun-water" of Roman days) and its modish license in adultery. There, for half a century, "Beau" Nash had reigned as "King"—its master of ceremonies and social dictator—with a pleasure court of gay blades and *filles de joie*. According to Caraccioli, Clive carried on numerous affairs here either without his wife's knowledge, or with her indulgence.

Lord Clive returned to London full of enthusiasm to fight and win the political contest that would secure him a seat for life, as a Peer of Ireland, in the House of Lords. Money and maneuver put him through by a landslide, as representative for Shrewsbury, capital of his native Shropshire, on April 27, 1761. He entered Parliament as a Pitt man, a Whig or Liberal. "Where you see a Whig, you see a rascal," Dr. Johnson remarked. "I have always said, the first Whig was the Devil. As for Lord Clive, his body is all vice and his mind all virtue; but every man of any education would rather be called a rascal than accused of deficiency in the graces." [17]

Though Clive was welcome at Court, and often paid his respects to the King *pro forma*, he did not play politics with the "King's Friends," George III's own party of autocratic conservatives. In fact, Clive politely refused all the advances of Prime Minister John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute, "an ignorant old Scotchman" who had won his laurels by scandalously amusing himself with George's amorous mother, Princess Augusta of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

"The Times are so critical," Clive wrote to Orme, "that every Member [of Parliament] has an Opportunity of fixing a Price upon

[15] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí (Vansert Sáhib lútí-o-zání búd, va-áidí-o-efváh-i-bachehá-i-Islám bi-mekhtúnish álúd, va-'awret-i-zen-i-Islám bi-ghulfish-o-nutfish álá'íd, va-kír-o-kún-i- Mírán Bég-i-qettál-o-dellál ham khízánid:* Vansittart Sáhib was a sodomist and a fornicator; and he fouled the hands and mouths of our children with his uncircumcision, and defiled the pudenda of our women with his foreskin and his sperm, and he even inflamed the penis and anus of that murderer and whoremonger Mírán Bég).

[16] *Wilkes Papers* (Potter to Wilkes).

[17] *Malcolm's Anecdotes* (see also Boswell's *Johnson*).

his Services. I still continue to be one of those unfashionable Kind of People who think very highly of Independency; and to bless my Stars, indulgent Fortune hath enabled me to act according to my Conscience." [18]

Pigot was also kept posted on London affairs: "Now that we are to have Peace abroad [*re* the Treaty of Paris, 1763], War is commencing at Home among ourselves. . . . Altho' I have such an Interest in Parliament that I should not be afraid of an Attack from the whole Court of Directors united, yet I should be a Madman to set at Defiance those who at present shew no Inclination to hurt me. My future Power, my future Grandeur, all depend upon Receipt of the Jagheer Money; and there is no Necessity of wantonly exciting them to Attempts against my Interests." [19] Thus, while Clive and Sulivan behaved "like shy Cocks, at times outwardly expressing great Regard and Friendship for each other," Sulivan continued to plot Clive's financial ruin and Clive continued to plan political reprisal.[20]

Every shareholder with at least £500 worth of East India Company stock was entitled to a vote in executive elections as a member of the Court of Proprietors. In early '63, when Mr. Laurence Sulivan stood again for the post of Chairman of the Court of Directors, Lord Clive bought up £100,000 worth of shares and doled them out to two hundred of his sympathizers. The election now seemed to be in the bag for Clive's nominee, Charles Boughton Rouse. "There is a terrible Storm brewing," Orme and Pigot were informed. "Sulivan is strongly opposed . . . , and it shall please me to unseat that Tyrant." [21] Informed of Clive's scheme, Sulivan mustered even greater support—and won. Company shares totaled some £3,200,000. Clive's biggest backers, the Duke of Newcastle and the Marquis of Rockingham, garnered less than a million. Sulivan was supported by Lord Bute and the Earl of Shelburne, of whom Johnson said: "His parts, sir, are pretty well for a lord—but would not be distinguished in a man who had nothing else but his parts." [22] (A play upon "parts," meaning "wits" as well as "genitals.") But it was Henry Fox (Lord Holland),

[18] *Orme Papers.*
[19] *Pigot Papers.*
[20] *Orme Papers.*
[21] *Orme/Pigot Papers.*
[22] Boswell.

England's unscrupulous Paymaster General, who turned the trick. Bute ordered him to use government funds for the purchase of East India stock, uttering this wry remark when Sulivan took the chair: "Lord Clive must have been strangely misled in his calculations!" [23]

"We have been cheated out of the Election," Rouse lamented.[24]

Immediately after his election Sulivan forwarded these instructions to the Governor and Council of Calcutta: "With Respect to the Jagheer given by Nabob Jaffer Ally Cawn to Lord Clive, arising out of the Lands granted by the said Nabob to the Company, We direct that You do not pay any further Sums to the Attorneys of Lord Clive on that Account; and We further direct that whatever shall arise in Future from the said Jagheer be carried to our Credit. . . . His Lordship's Pretensions to the said Jagheer will be settled here." [25]

Apprized of this order, Clive immediately sent the following directions to his old standby, Major Jack Carnac, Adjutant General in Bengal: "In case the Governour & Council should retain my Money, or refuse giving Bills of Exchange, You (or whoever acts as my Attorney) are Immediately to commence a Suit-at-Law against the Co." [26]

Conferring with a friend of long standing, Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, as well as with the Attorney General (Charles Yorke) and the Solicitor General (Fletcher Norton) of His Majesty's Government, Baron Clive was advised that the Company had no case against him: that Sulivan's sequestration orders were illegal, and that the Directors' claim to his *jágír* was without legal foundation. Indeed, this was an unjustifiable interference in the affairs of the native state; for only Neváb Ja'fer, if he so chose, had the right to confiscate Clive's property.

Clive promptly filed suit against the Right Honourable Chairman and Court of Directors. *He that goes to law holds a wolf by the ears.* In his letter to Carnac, Clive termed the lawsuit "an Act of Necessity in order to save my undoubted Property from the worst of Enemies, a Combination of ungratefull Directors." [27] He then warned

[23] *Malcolm's Anecdotes.*
[24] *Orme Papers.*
[25] *Bengal MS. Records.*
[26] *Orme Papers.*
[27] *Ibid.*

Vansittart and Council: "The Opinion of the Lawyers is, that the Directors' Orders are illegal; therefore, you will comply with them at your own Peril." [28]

The Directors' orders were not complied with in Calcutta, and litigation never started in London, for the whole nation was suddenly shocked by evil tidings from India. On February 4, 1764, word arrived from Governor George Pigot that Bengal was in ruinous anarchy and that a tragedy far worse than the Black Hole incident had been enacted by a usurper whose cruelty rivaled that of Sirájuddawleh.

[28] *Ibid.*

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* 38 *

THE AUGEAN STABLE

1760–63. Calcutta, the City of Palaces, had degenerated to a den of thieves. Harry Vansittart, a "loocher" (lecher) and a "budmash" (scoundrel), was served by a hand-picked council of blackguards and reprobates. Clive's ever-faithful informant, Warren Hastings, kept him posted on all the dirty work and foul play carried on between Calcutta and Murshidabad.

It was Allah's opportune will that Neváb Ja'fer's heir, Mírán Bég, should be struck dead by a bolt of lightning before he could hatch a plot of usurpation against his senile sire. "Meeran is *said* to have been kill'd by Lightning," Hastings imparted to Clive, "which I understand as being of the Burkundauze [*berqandáz*, "lightning-thrower" or matchlockman] Variety." [1] He was right. The murder weapon was forced up Mírán's fundament and discharged internally, thus leaving no outward evidence. The plotting prince was found dead in his tent, after a thunderstorm, while on "maneuvers" outside the capital.

[1] *Clive Papers.*

The instigator of this "accidental death"? His uncle, Mír Qásim 'Alí Khán! [2]

The insanely ambitious brother of the Nevàb now approached the corruptible English with a boodle of two million rupees stolen from the royal treasury. "I have no fear of Sábit Jang," he said to Vansittart, "and my ears are open to you. Accept this token of my friendship, and support me in establishing a new government, and soon my wrongheaded brother may also meet with an unfortunate accident."

"Your brother is old and feeble," the Governor answered. "Get rid of him, but without bloodshed. That is the best way." [3]

Qásim nodded, grinning like a wolf, then affixed his signature and seal to a ready-made treaty. Before long, Ja'fer 'Alí Khán was dragged from the throne and exiled to Calcutta. Holwell, in a letter to the Court of Proprietors, avers that he overheard Mír Qásim's suggestion to Vansittart "that if Meer Jaffer were not murther'd, it would never be in his Power to render the Company those Services which he had so much at Heart." [4] Holwell's reaction is recorded by Edmund Burke: "Cossim Ally Cawn proposed to Mr. Holwell what would have been no bad Supplement to the Flash of Lightning: the Murder of the Nabob; but Mr. Holwell was a Man of too much Honour and Conscience to suffer that. He instantly flew out at it, and declared the whole Business should stop unless the Affair of the Murder was given up." [5] Apparently, Holwell swayed Vansittart to mercy; and Ja'fer, pensioned off at two thousand rupees a month, retired to Calcutta "with as many of his Wenches as he desired (to the Number of about 60) & a reasonable Quantity of Jewells," leaving (in Holwell's words) "a Government of more Value than many Kingdoms of Europe, supported by us at the Expence of our Blood, untill it became a Scandal & Reproach to our Name & Nation." [6]

After dividing the two million rupees among his fellow conspirators, Mr. Vansittart found that he had only half a million for his efforts. Nor were his associates satisfied with their shares of the bribe. So, without Nevàb Qásim's leave or indulgence, the Governor and

[2] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí;* Kerem 'Alí; Husayn Khán.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Orme Papers.*
[5] Burke, Edmund: *Papers.*
[6] *India Tracts; Orme Papers.*

Council launched into a systematic plundering of the entire kingdom. Their native agents rode over the countryside, robbing and raping. Every unscrupulous merchant fancied himself a "nabob," rioted in filthy-rich luxury, and maintained huge harems. Goods were disposed of at black-market prices, revenues were appropriated, and extortion, graft, and fraud were practiced with impunity. The helpless people of Bengal were bled white and plucked bare in the name of *Ján Kampení*. As Saiyed Ghulám Husayn Khán (historian at the Court of Murshidabad) expressed it in his *Siyer-i-Mut'ákhirín* (The Modern Scene), "The little finger of John Company weighs more heavily upon us than the hard and bloody fist of Sirájuddawleh ever did."

"Conquests are easily made in this Country, but not easily turn'd into Money." These are Vansittart's words. In his opinion, " 'Twas Col. Clive's Good Fortune to leave India before the Company's Treasure was totally exhausted." And, in reference to Ja'fer's deposal: "I don't think Col. Clive could have supported him 12 Months longer, if he had stay'd."

The man who made these statements had written on the day of his appointment to the governorship: "No private Interest of mine shall ever come in Competition with the Demands of the Company & the Publick." [7] But, as Macaulay states, "Enormous fortunes were rapidly accumulated at Calcutta while thirty millions of human beings were reduced to the extremity of wretchedness. . . . The English government . . . , oppressive as the most oppressive form of barbarian despotism, was strong with all the strength of civilisation. It resembled the government of evil Genii rather than the government of human tyrants." He adds that "The servants of the Company obtained . . . a monopoly of almost the whole internal trade. They forced the natives to buy dear and sell cheap." [8]

These charges are confirmed by many contemporary observers, both European and Indian. One English merchant writes that "the poor Manufacturers and Workmen of the Country" were "monopolized by the Company as so many Slaves. . . . It may with Truth be now said, that the whole Inland Trade of the Country . . . has been one continued Scene of Oppression." [9]

[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Essays* (Clive).
[9] *Transactions in India.*

In the spring of '62, Neváb Qásim complained to Governor Vansittart that "By means of these oppressions, and my being deprived of my revenues, I suffer a yearly loss of nearly twenty-five lakhs [2,500,000] of rupees." [10] Harry Verelst (an honest member of the Calcutta Council) later wrote that the Indian agents of the English, not content with injuring their own people for gain, "trampled on the Authority of Government, binding and punishing the Nabob's Officers whenever they presumed to interfere." [11]

Clive would then add that these agents or *gomashtas*, acting under the aegis of the Company, "have committed Crimes which make the Name of the English stink in the Nostrils of Hindoos & Moosulmans alike; and the Co.'s Servants themselves have interfered with the Revenues of the Nabob, turn'd out & put in the Officers of Gov't at pleasure, and made every one pay for their Preferment. When simple Corruption could not keep Pace with their Rapacity, they resorted to atrocious Extortion." [12] As one army officer succinctly put it, "The present System is rotten to the Core!" [13] And, to quote Mill, "The conduct of the Company's servants furnishes one of the most remarkable instances upon record of the power of interest to extinguish all sense of justice and even of shame."

Was the Company, *per se*, wholly responsible for this reign of corruption and terror? The barbarities of Sirájuddawleh and the treacheries of Ja'fer had caused a cynical reaction, inducing certain Britons to forfeit Christian honor and charity among selfish and dishonorable "vulgarians." (*Necessity hath no law!*) To rob a thief is not so reprehensible, but the evil did not end there. If the English merchant fleeced the Indian merchant, the latter (in turn) preyed upon the Indian manufacturer, who tyrannized the Indian artisan. It was a vicious circle, and none was without blame. The *banyans* (dealers) and *gomashtas* (agents) used their connections with the all-powerful English as a means of exploiting and plundering their fellow countrymen. They did nothing to defend their own people against foreign oppression. They profited by it, perpetuated and promoted it. In the words of one eyewitness, "The [Bengali] Gov't . . . is torn to Pieces

[10] *Fort William MS. Records* (in Persian).
[11] *The English Government in Bengall.*
[12] *Orme Papers.*
[13] *Ibid.*

by a Sett of Rascalls who in Calcutta walk about in Rags, but when they are sent oute on Gomashta-ships, lord it over the Country, imprisoning the Ryotts [peasants] & Merchants, and writing & talking in the most insolent, domineering Manner to the Foudgedars [district officials] & Officers." [14] "It would amaze you," wrote the chief factor at Cossimbazar, "the Number of Complaints that Daily come before me of the villainous Extravagances committed by our Agents & Gomashtas all over the Country." [15]

To throw all the blame on Leadenhall Street is no less fatuous than indicting every Briton in Bengal or bemoaning the fate of venal Hindustanis. Communications were poor, distances great, discipline arbitrary, enterprise licentious: all encouragements to corruption. To quote Holwell: "The Court of Directors were so sensible of the repeated Abuse of this Indulgence [duty-free trade] that, I think, there are no less than Five-and-Twenty Standing Orders against it transmitted to their President & Council of Fort William from the Year 1717 to 1756: each of these Orders directing, on Detection, Restitution of the Nabob's Duties, immediate Dismission from the Service, and the Aggressor to be sent to England on the first returning Ship; but notwithstanding these Orders, and the utmost Vigillance of their Council abroad to prevent this Practice, it was found impossible." [16] And the Court of Directors themselves wrote to Calcutta in '65, denouncing "unwarrantable and licentious Trade" and accusing the Council of "a determined Resolution to sacrifice the Interest of the Company and the Peace of the Country to lucrative and selfish Views"; "of violating Treaties, of great Oppression, and a Combination to enrich themselves"; of "an unbounded Thirst after Riches" and "Oppressions of the unhappy Natives," which "illegal Traffick" and "Scene of the most tyrannick and oppressive Conduct that ever was known in any Age or Country . . . laid the Foundation of all the Bloodshed, Massacres, and Confusion which have happen'd of late Years." [17]

Qásim 'Alí Khán kept his government solvent only by shaking down the wealthy Hindus of Murshidabad. When they cried a poor

[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Fort William MS. Records.*
[16] *India Tracts.*
[17] *Bengal MS. Records.*

mouth, he preyed upon the pock-marked Rajah of Patna, opulent Rámnáráyan. The Hindu governor was seized and jailed, and all his wealth was confiscated, on charges of tax embezzlement and treason. Vansittart was obliged to answer his appeal for protection by sending "that Hotspur" Eyre Coote to the capital, as a gesture of mediation. He sent the wrong man. Mr. Hastings informed Mr. Vansittart that "The Nabob complain'd to me that Col. Coote, in great Passion (a drunken Fit, I should say), with a cock'd Pistol in each Hand & follow'd by a Mob of Sepoys, came uttering God-damme's into his Palace. It so happen'd that he was asleep in the Zenanah [harem], and not fit to receive Visitors when intruded upon by Col. Coote. His Excellency is at a Loss to express the unbecoming Manner in which the Colonel went about from Room to Room, with 35 Horsemen & 200 Sepoys, striking Terror into every one & calling out, 'Where is the Nabob?' " [18]

Coote was instantly recalled, and Rámnáráyan was apparently doomed to rot in a dungeon. "May Success & Honour attend him [Coote] in any other Part of the World," Hastings wrote Sulivan, "but God forbid that he should ever return to any Part of India again!" He added, pointedly: "God forbid that the Gov't of this fine Country should continue to be a mere Chair for a Triennial Succession of indigent Adventurers to sit & hatch private Fortunes in." [19] Hastings again wrote to Vansittart, this time of imminent disaster: "How will it be possible for the Nabob, whilst he hears the Cries of his People, which he can not redress, not to wish to free himself from an Alliance which subjects him to such Indignities?" [20]

While Vansittart, intent on lining his pockets, ignored all admonitions to moderation, Qásim mobilized a mighty army to restore all revenues stolen by the "Calcutta Cabal." European soldiers of fortune were hired to train the Neváb's recruits in the modern European style. A German adventurer, Walther Reinhardt, who had married an Indian princess, was appointed commander-in-chief of the Neváb's forces. One of Qásim's first steps was to end Vansittart's trade monopoly. He issued a *sanad* or edict abolishing all customs duties in Bengal for the space of two years. The Calcutta Council

[18] *Wilks Papers; Orme Papers.*
[19] *Ibid.; Hastings Papers.*
[20] *Ibid.*

threw a furious fit; for the general exemption of all Bengalis from payment of duties violated their exclusive privileges, reduced their powers of extortion, and violated the spirit of the imperial charter and subsequent treaties. A declaration of war was debated. Nearly all were in favor. One of those opposed was Warren Hastings. "The Nabob has granted a Boon to his Subjects," he reasoned, "and there are no Grounds for demanding that a Sovereign Prince should withdraw such a Boon or for threatening him with War in the Event of Refusal." [21]

Mr. William Ellis, erratic chief of the Company's Patna factory, was incensed at Qásim's occupation of the town as a training base for some of his troops. Acting independently, he launched a surprise night attack on the fort of Patna, apparently with a design to precipitate what was being debated in Calcutta: *war*. The small garrison of recruits surrendered at once, and Ellis declared Patna a Company protectorate. Qásim's response was to dispatch an expedition to retake the town. Ellis wanted to stand siege, but his compatriots ran for their lives. A hundred and fifty of them, including Ellis Sáhib, were overtaken and brought back to Patna in chains.

Neváb Qásim now seized the English factories at Dacca and Cossimbazar. Several hundred more European prisoners were driven to Patna. Many of the girls and young women were raped, many of the boys and young men forcibly sodomized and circumcised.[22] Shocked into reaction, Governor Vansittart and the Calcutta Council voted that Neváb Qásim 'Alí Khán Behádur had betrayed their trust (a grave matter of dishonor among thieves) and that it was their bounden duty to dispose of him at any price. Hence, on July 24, bad-brother Qásim was proclaimed a pretender and decrepit Ja'fer 'Alí Khán was (to his great embarrassment and shame) formally reinstated as Neváb of Bengal.

In desperation, with the Company's troops out to get him, Qásim went berserk. Most of his warriors had deserted to Delhi, where they were promised better pay by the new emperor. His only hope was to escape across the frontier, but he left bloody tokens of his departure. Rájá Rámnáráyan was tossed into the crocodile-infested Ganges with a bag of sand tied around his neck. The heads of Jagat Séth's two

21 *Hastings Papers.*
22 *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

sons, Mehtábrái and Svárupchand, were chopped off and dropped on the Great Banker's doorstep. Their naked bodies were then "expozed to Beasts & Birds of Prey, that they might not be burn'd according to the Rites of the Gentoo Religion." [23] Dozens of influential Hindus and Muslims were slaughtered for withholding their support.

Qásim then used his European captives to self-protective advantage. "If you are determined to pursue me to the death," he wrote to Major Thomas Adams, commander of the pursuing force, "know for a certainty that I will cut off the heads of Mr. Ellis and the rest of your chiefs, and send them to you." Ellis, defiant of death, was permitted to add an English postscript to his captor's message: "Please to be impress'd that no Consideration of our Situation should prevent ye Army from proceeding in their Operation." [24] Major Adams' reply was: "If a hair of their heads is hurt, you can expect no mercy from the English, but may depend upon the utmost fury of their resentment: that they will pursue you to the ends of the earth." [25]

On October 5, in the prison courtyard at Patna, an act of madness was perpetrated. Qásim directed that three of the English factors should be castrated and decapitated, and their heads and genitals sent to Adams along with a sack of severed foreskins. The choicest captives, male and female, were then taken or sold as slaves. Those who remained (almost two hundred Europeans) were herded into the yard where, executing Qásim's orders, Reinhardt and a battalion of sepoys shot them down. "*Máro! máro!*" Reinhardt screamed. *Kill! kill!* And they did. Every European prisoner died, among them Henry Lushington, survivor of the Black Hole and alleged forger of Admiral Watson's signature, who preferred death to life as a eunuch. Qásim and Reinhardt made no effort to give their victims a civilized burial. The corpses were merely pitched down a couple of wells, there to await the carrion birds and a relief force that arrived too late.[26] In the massacre at Patna, the uncle of Sirájuddawleh had eclipsed the Calcutta tragedy.

Warren Hastings, who had fled Murshidabad, wrote heatedly to Robert Clive:

[23] *Sykes Journal.*
[24] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] *Ibid.*

There have been more English Men, Women & Children murder'd, tortured, mutilated & abused in India than any other European People ever to settle here, and for no other Reason than the Incompetency & Corruption of our Gov't. I myself, forced & carved by the Fiends of Sirajoodowlah, can attest to the Savagery of Moosulmans when not restrain'd by Law & Order. This vile Experience I shall never forget; nor will those of our Fellow Countrymen who have suffer'd, and still suffer, the like Degradation. For God's Sake, Sir, come at once & put an End to this Madness before we are All of us become Slaves or are slaughter'd.[27]

[27] *Maskelyne Papers.*

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THE HERCULEAN TASK

When news of the Patna massacre reached England, Clive's first comment was that "We have sown the wind and reaped the whirlwind." [1] An emergency general meeting of the Courts of Directors and Proprietors was called where it was unanimously agreed that the situation in Bengal necessitated drastic action. Governor Vansittart was apparently incapable of coping with the emergency, and the members of his council were deemed equally incompetent. Chairman Sulivan was obliged to swallow his pride, for he knew as well as the others that there was only one man who could save Bengal. "Therefore," he concluded soberly, "we request Lord Clive to take upon himself the station of President of Bengal and the command of the Company's military forces there." [2]

Rising to his feet, Clive received an ovation but his reply was disconcerting. "If the Directors are as well disposed towards me as I

[1] *Sykes Journal.*
[2] *E.I.C. Court Minutes* (Feb. 6, 1764).

am towards them, then I have no objection to undertaking this service. But till I find such a disposition, I desire to be excused from coming to any resolution." [3]

The Directors and Proprietors gaped. What the devil did he mean? Didn't he already have their unanimous vote of confidence? But Laurence Sulivan knew what the nabob meant.

Several days later, hearing no word from Clive, the Chairman and Directors informed him by special letter that "We are again *Unanimous* in assuring You that we will most chearfully concur in taking the Steps necessary to carry the Resolution of the Gen'l Court into effect, and in preparing every Convenience for your Passage." [4] Determined to force Sulivan to the wall, he replied: "I must desire You will return the Directors my Thanks, for their Offers of preparing every Convenience for my Passage." [5]

Again the Directors and Proprietors met in general session, requesting a definite decision from the Great Nabob. Clive demurred, saying "he would give his Answer as soon as the next Election of Directors [in April] should be determined." The Directors resolved to repeal his appointment.[6] But the Proprietors were solid in Clive's favor and overruled the Directors. Clive then openly asserted that "he could not accept the Service if Mr. Chairman Sulivan remain'd in the Lead of the Direction." [7] To break the deadlock, Chairman Sulivan stood up and declared: "If it please Lord Clive, I solemnly assure the house that I shall co-operate with him in the most honorable and friendly manner." Clive responded: "I thank the Honorable Chairman for his gentlemanly gesture, but I beg leave to consider this offer of co-operation at appropriate length." [8] Leave was granted; the meeting adjourned.

Clive waited a week, contemplating Sulivan's discomfort, then wrote to the Directors: "Upon the whole, I still continue to be of Opinion that, in case the Proprietors think it for their Advantage that Mr. Sulivan should remain . . . in the Lead of their Affairs, I can not accept their Service; but in case the Proprietors should not

[3] *Ibid.*; Sykes.
[4] *Clive Papers.*
[5] *E.I.C. Records.*
[6] *E.I.C. Court Minutes.*
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.*

think it necessary to continue Mr. Sulivan in such Authority, I am willing & ready to accept their Service." [9] Clive won the battle of wills. At the Proprietors' uncompromising insistence, the Directors had no choice but to "retire" Sulivan and appoint a Clive supporter, Charles Rouse, to the chairmanship.

Before accepting the supreme office of "Governour-President of Bengall," Clive demanded and received absolute authority "in order to restore Peace and Tranquillity." [10] As Macaulay noted, the nabob was never one to do things by halves! He then vowed "not to engage in any Kind of Trade myself" and "not to enrich myself One Farthing by any Pay or Emoluments, but to devote all my unselfish Efforts to restoring Law & Order to Bengall." [11] Clive communicated to Pigot: "Sulivan, the Tyrant, is dethroned; and I am returning to Bengall, like Caesar to Rome. I demanded & was granted Full Power for myself alone; and I thank my Stars I can act according to my own Conscience, independent of the Desires & Temptations of this World. Do you think History can furnish an Instance of a Man with £50,000 per annum, a Wife & Family, abandoning his Native Country & all the Blessings of Life to take charge of a Gov't so corrupt, so Head-strong, so lost to all Principle & Sense of Honour, as that of Bengall is?" [12]

June 4, 1764. Robert Clive took ship to India for the third and last time, there to demonstrate that the wealthiest Englishman was also the most self-sacrificing. "I am come with a Mind superior to all Corruption," he wrote Pigot, "and am determined to destroy these great & growing Evils or perish in the Attempt. I will not stand patiently by & see a Great Empire, acquired by great Abilities, Perseverance & Resolution, lost by Ignorance, Corruption & Indolence." [13]

Fearful of Clive's coming, Governor Vansittart spared no expense to avenge the Patna massacre. Qásim and Reinhardt were chased into Oudh, where they took refuge with Neváb Shujá'uddawleh. When summoned to surrender the "fiends," Shujá'uddawleh accused the English of aggression and advanced a huge army to drive them back.

[9] *E.I.C. Records.*
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Pigot Papers.*
[13] *Pigot Papers.*

Major Hector Munro and the Company's Bengali forces routed this horde at Buxar (October 23, 1764), killing thousands and occupying the ancient kingdom. The three outlaws fled to Delhi, where they sought the aid of the new emperor. When Ahmed Sháh was murdered by his power-mad vizier, who was in turn murdered by the heir apparent, 'Alí Gawher Mu'azzem Khán Behádur Sháhzádeh mounted the throne and proclaimed himself *Sháh 'Álem* or "King of the World." Shujá'uddawleh had aided him during his ill-fated attempt on Bengal in the folly of youth. Sháh 'Álem returned the favor by ordering the three fugitives out of his capital. Reinhardt slit his own throat; Qásim, holing up in a house of male prostitution, wasted away of venereal disease; and Shujá'uddawleh surrendered to Sháh 'Álem all his riches and was appointed Grand Vizier of the Mughal Empire.

The irony of fate! Bégam Samrú (Begum Sumroo), Reinhardt's widow and Ranee of Sardhana, gave her favors to every British officer in Bengal; whence her nickname, *Bíbí Chút* (Lady Cunt). And when she could no longer lure lusty English cocks into her nest, she sacrificed sensuality on the altar of penitent decrepitude by building Roman Catholic churches and endowing seminaries for priests.[14] *Jeune coquette, vieille dévote!*

Much to his dismay, Neváb Ja'fer was forced to pay for his brother's folly. Vansittart & Co. exacted six million rupees to cover the cost of the campaign, five million rupees as tribute for the Bengal Army, and the unlikely sum of 10,600,000 rupees as "Re-embursement for personal Losses." *Allah forbid!* The shock nearly killed the old man. Over two hundred lakhs of rupees! The royal treasury was swept bare.

Sábit Jang átá hay! . . . Clive is coming!

Ja'fer 'Alí Khán was set at ease, forever. Two months before that anxiously awaited return, he, like his brother Qásim, succumbed to the curse of Venus. Nearly a million and a half rupees (his entire fortune) he left "To Sábit Jang, whom I betrayed in my folly but who, in his great wisdom, never betrayed me."[15] Clive donated the bequest as a charity fund for disabled Anglo-Indian veterans, and for the widows and orphans of Company servants.

Clive landed at Madras on April 10, 1765. Jovial George Pigot,

[14] *Sykes Journal*; Kerem 'Alí.
[15] *Ibid.*

with a spirited gathering of old acquaintances, greeted him on the glaring beach. Twenty years before, to a penniless and forlorn cadet, that beach seemed to glare even hotter—with evil eyes of unwelcome. "Thank God you're come!" were Pigot's words as he clasped Clive's hand with both of his own.

"Rest assured," Clive answered, "I'm resolved to replace rapacity by capacity and to rid that den of its beasts of prey. All Company servants shall henceforth be restrained in their private dealings and public acquisitions in excess of five thousand rupees, and shall moreover be constrained to enter into a covenant that holds each man accountable for his own affairs. By God, I mean to end that outrageous indulgence in lawless and unlimited trafficking which has reduced the country to a Pandemonium." [16] He wrote to Chairman Rouse from Fort St. George: "What an Augoean Stable there is to be clean'd! . . . The Evils, Civil & Military, are enormous; but they *shall* be rooted out." [17]

Sháh 'Álem, whose broken fortune Clive had repaired with a monetary gift, was again sore in need of "the sinews of affairs." Now a straight-thinking man of foresight, he ventured to save his crumbling empire and dwindling prestige by making a momentous deal with the East India Company. He urged Clive officially to annex Mughal India to the British Empire, thereby subsidizing a titular dynasty, for an annual tribute of 2,600,000 rupees. Clive informed Rouse: "It is scarcely an Hyperbole to say that the whole Mogull Empire is in our Hands." [18] He then dashed off an urgent message to his London financial agent, Mr. George Clive, directing that "Whatever Money I may have in the Publick Funds or anywhere else, and as much as can be borrow'd in my Name, I desire may be (without Loss of a Minute) invested in East India Stock." [19] With the annexation of Hindustan, E.I.C. shares would boom and the greatest stockholder would then monopolize an incalculable store of wealth.

Clive arrived in Calcutta on May 3, 1765. Among the many messages of greeting was one from Jagat Séth and Ráidulábh Rám: "As the parched earth is refreshed by the blessing of rain, and as the bud-

[16] Sykes.
[17] *Orme Papers.*
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Clive Papers.*

ding flower recovers its beauty and fragrance by the sweet breeze of spring, so has the news of your arrival afforded relief to our anxious minds." [20]

Henry Vansittart resigned before he could be fired. While Clive was at sea, he gathered up all his loot and slipped away on the fastest ship for England, there to join forces with Laurence Sulivan, in a relentless struggle to unseat Rouse and ruin Clive. Clive immediately wrote to Rouse to watch Vansittart: "He is the meanest, dirtiest Rascal that ever lived; and were he here, I had call'd him out for an arrant Coward & a Thief, and shot him down like a Dog. At first Opportunity, I shall cashier the entire Council & effectuate such Reforms as are necessary to restore Sanity to this Bedlam-broke-loose. I have found, as expected, that . . . the whole Country was plunder'd by Gomashtas who have committed such Actions as have made the Name of the English stink to High Heaven." [21] To Orme he wrote: "I made no Doubt of discovering such a Scene as would be shocking to Human Nature: . . . Anarchy, Confusion, . . . Corruption. . . . In a Country where Money is plenty, where Fear is the Principle of Gov't, and where our Arms are ever-victorious, it is no wonder that the Lust of Riches should readily embrace the proffer'd Means of its Gratification!" [22]

Clive found a sixteen-year-old debauchee on the throne of Bengal. Najmuddawleh ("Star of the State") was the frivolous, effeminate offspring of Ja'fer 'Alí and a Murshidabad prostitute. He had forked over nearly three million rupees for the nominal title of Nevàb. In the absence of "Mr. Van," Council President John Johnstone (the lean and lusty scion of a Scottish baronet) pocketed well over five hundred thousand of the purchase, handed his brother William about a hundred thousand, then divided what was left among the Council members. Clive notified Chairman Rouse and the Court of Directors that "They have All received immense Sums for this new Appointment [of Najmuddawleh], and are so shameless as to own it publickly." [23]

[20] Kerem 'Alí.
[21] *Orme Papers.*
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] *E.I.C. Records.*

Clive ordered Johnstone to return the bribe to Najmuddawleh or clear out of India with his "pack of wolves." [24] While the councilors cowered, trembling under Clive's epithets of "jackals" and "hyenas" and "bloodsucking purveyors of barefaced corruption," their defiant president accepted the challenge and said with a sneer: "Goddamme, is this the pot calling the kettle black? As I see you have no ground to stand on, m'Lud, 'tis only fair I demand an exact definition of your extraordinary powers."

"Aye," seconded his brother. "Pray inform us, m'Lud, of the meaning and extent of your peculiar powers."

Clive lashed out at the Johnstones: "So help me Hercules, I will not suffer *anyone* to enter into the least discussion about the meaning and extent of my powers. How dare you dispute my authority in the face of the Honorable Chairman of the Court of Directors, who has empowered me in this mission!" [25] "Upon which," Clive informed Rouse, "there was an Appearance of very long & pale Countenances; and not One of the Council utter'd another Syllable. From this you will see what I had the Honour to inform you of: that I am determined upon an Absolute Reformation." [26]

Clive again demanded that the tribute extorted from Najmuddawleh be turned over to the Company, for restoration to the Bengali treasury. Again Johnstone flatly refused. "With regard to presents in general," he declared sardonically, "we have the approved example of Lord Clive himself for our guide." [27]

All Company servants who refused to sign the new covenants were threatened with dismissal. Nearly all, both civil and military, signed. Clive allowed Johnstone and Council the dubious honor of resigning, which they did. One committed suicide; while the rest, before the "dictator" could take legal action to impound their ill-gotten wealth, stole out of Calcutta and escaped to England. There they threw in with Sulivan and Vansittart; and Johnstone, with an affluent family and influential friends, was to play a part in hounding Clive to death.

[24] *Sykes Journal.*
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] *Orme Papers.*
[27] *Sykes Journal.*

"Let me but have Health sufficient to go thro' with the Reformation we intend," Clive wrote to his wife, "and I shall die with Satisfaction & in Peace." [28]

[28] *Clive Papers.*

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THE EMPIRE

Robert Clive now acted to negotiate annexation of all Bengal into official Company control. His first move was to pension off the misfit Neváb, Najmuddawleh Khán. "Allah be praised!" was the dissolute youth's only reaction. "Now I shall have as many whores as I please!" Ten million rupees a year to squander in riotous living was better to him than all the princely power on earth. "Bring me dancing-girls and pretty boys! My rod of empire is between my legs!" [1] Several months later, Najmuddawleh was secretly murdered by his younger brother, Sayfuddawleh ("Sword of the State"), and by the wily vizier, Mír Muhammed Rizá Khán, whose amorous advances had been repelled by Najmuddawleh. Some said Clive had a hand in it, by supplying the poison, but that is a moot point; for the new Neváb, whose allowance was cut in half, was a thirteen-year-old catamite.[2] But as Sayfuddawleh, bending to Muhammed Rizá's will, fared better than his dimwitted brother, Clive was content. Thus, the pendulum of internal affairs swung between the penis and anus!

Clive appointed a three-man *díván* or council of state finance—Muhammed Rizá Khán, Ráidulábh Rám, and Jagat Séth—to manage the *dívání* (dominium, proprietorship) or E.I.C. right of collecting and utilizing all revenues for the administration of Bengal. This *dívání* would soon cover every territory of Mughal India once regu-

[1] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí* (*'Asá-i-dawletam miyán-i-ránameh!*).
[2] *Ibid.*

lated by the Nevábs. ("We must become the Nabobs ourselves," he had written Rouse, "in Fact if not in Name, without Disguise.") [3] Clive's Dual System, it was called, by which Indians collected the taxes and Englishmen disposed of them: each sharing in the administration of government. It was a good system, designed to "prevent the Revenues being dissipated on a Set of plaguey Rascals," but, wanting good men to run it, it would soon become a bad system, developing new forms of corruption.

June 25, 1765. Clive handed the reins of government to William Brightwell Sumner (Vice-President of the Select Committee) and left Calcutta for Allahabad, where Sháh 'Álem awaited him. It was Sumner's task to form a new council, reducing its number from sixteen to twelve. He formed the new council, as instructed, but was bribed and bullied into making it a sixteen-man combine. Getting wind of this, Clive berated Sumner as "a most despicable Wretch: mean, avaricious, rapacious, tyrannical, selfish & timid." He accused him of attempting to restore "a State of Anarchy & Confusion," to "abolish the Power of the [Select] Committee," and "to frustrate the Intentions of a Gen'l Court [of Directors and Proprietors] who thought me a proper Person to curb that licentious Spirit of Disobedience in the Servants & at the same Time put a Stop to that Torrent of universal Corruption & Luxury which had almost overwhelm'd the Settlement." [4]

He then wrote to Francis Sykes, third on the Select Committee: "Sumner's Behaviour is so inexpressibly weak & timid that . . . if a Feaver would carry him off, it would be the best thing that could happen for the Co." He added that the behavior of Calcutta councilors and merchants "is so ungratefull, as well as boyish & ridiculous, that I am determ'd henceforw'd to harbour in my Breast not the least Compassion for such harden'd Sinners." Indeed, if his will be done, all of them "shall go to Pot." [5] Sykes replied that opposition to reform "is beginning to pass all reasonable Bounds. I never saw or heard of such a Spirit of Villainy." [6] Clive rejoined: "The Behaviour of the Council has convinced me they are Children & Fools as well as

[3] *Orme Papers.*
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*

Knaves; and we may now, with great Propriety, let the Sense of Humanity give way to Justice. For my own part, I am determ'd to shew them no more Mercy." [7]

Writing Sykes from Benares on August 3, Clive declared: "I am much mistaken if 10 Days does not bring to a Conclusion the most glorious, honourable & advantageous Event that ever happen'd to this Comp'y. . . . We intend to make Use of H.M. [His Majesty, the Grand Mughal] in a very extra-ordinary Manner, for obtaining nothing less than a Sunnud [royal charter] for all the Revenues of this Country. . . . These fat, expensive Moors who spend the Gov't's Revenues in Luxury & Dissipation must pay their Rents regularly in Future or immediately be turn'd out [of proprietorship]. Indeed, in my Opinion, none but Gentoos ought to be Renters of Countries!" [8] (Clive was correct in his observation that Hindus "always spend less than their Income & can, when call'd upon, make good any Deficiency in the Revenues." Nonetheless, "Roydoolob must be watch'd & not suffer'd to pilfer, steal, extort, or oppress." [9] Clive's view was also shared by Carnatic Nevâb Muhammed 'Alí Khán, who stated publicly: "I prefer Hindus as comptrollers and renters to those of my own religion, because a Muslim is like a sieve and a Hindu like a sponge. Whatever you put into the one runs through; but the other retains it all, and you may recover it at any moment by the application of a little pressure.") [10]

Governor Clive coursed up the rapid, turbid Ganges in a magnificent state barge rowed by chanting naked natives. His eyes rested on sleepy villages and shimmery fields, but his thoughts were in the gold-fretted clouds of a dream of plenty. At Benares, Mecca of India and Cradle of Hinduism, he beheld the ancient *ghauts* or landings rising from the sacred river like a sweeping amphitheater crowned with myriad temples and swarming with white-clad pilgrims and wild-eyed holy men worshiping in a funeral-pyre haze that wafted the aroma of "roast Hindoo."

It was at Allahabad, the "Abode of Allah" but a holy city of the Hindus, that Clive and Sháh 'Álem met for the first and last time.

[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] Ibn Hasen.

The day was August 12, the year 1765. Attended by Grand Vizier Shujá'uddawleh Khán and military attaché Colonel John Carnac, His Excellency the Emperor 'Alí Gawher Mu'azzem Khán Behádur Sháh 'Álem was seated on a silk-draped armchair, atop an English dining table covered with gold-embroidered cloth, in a large tent festooned with Mughal finery. He was sedately attired in a white muslin robe of honor and bejeweled turban, crimson cummerbund and slippers, and green pajamas. Strings of pearls and gem-studded medallions hung from his neck, glittering rings adorned his hands, and (so Clive would soon discover) a little gold *lingam* or phallus was tied to his penis to protect it and him from the omnipresent Evil Eye. The green-and-gold "Mogull Fish-flag," symbolic of the omnipotence of the Circumcised, decorated the tent wall behind him.[11] Robert Clive, nobly arrayed in a scarlet robe and yellow turban, returned the Emperor's salute and signaled for the ceremony to begin. As one native observer (Saiyed Ghulám Husayn) noted, "the transaction was terminated in less time than it would have taken to sell a jackass." Burke more eloquently termed it "the great Act of the constitutional Entrance of the Company into the Body Politick of India." In exchange for the titular status of Emperor of Delhi and an annual tribute of approximately 2,600,000 rupees, Sháh 'Álem ceded an empire worth Rs. 100,000,000 per annum and yielding a yearly surplus (in British currency) of two millions sterling for the stockholders' pockets; and the biggest shareholder, the Great Nabob, was now one of the wealthiest men in the world.

Sháh 'Álem read aloud the royal proclamation transferring the dominion of Bengal "as a free gift" to the jurisdiction of the British East India Company "from generation to generation, for ever and ever." He then rose, leaned over, handed Lord Clive the deed of transfer: the "Magna Charta of the Company." By way of covenant, to seal and sanctify the pact, they reached into each other's robes and grasped each other's *zekr*, declaring: *"Bismilláh'rrehmánerrehím! Ilhamdulilláh!"* (In the name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful! Praise be to Allah!) [12] The editor of *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí* notes there is no evidence that Clive reacted to this ritual as he is said to have reacted to Sirájuddawleh's "tricky touch." Clive salaamed, the Em-

[11] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí;* Husayn Khán; Kerem 'Alí.
[12] *Ibid.*

peror salaamed, and the golden vision at last became real. After twenty years of bloody striving, Clive had ceremoniously won Hindustan for Britain in one bloodless day.

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things . . .

Lulled by lapping waters, at rest in the royal barge, Clive wrote to his wife: "I have been 700 Miles up the Country, in the Middle of the Rainy Season. H.M. the Grand Mogull & Prime Vizier & myself have been very great together. . . . Tranquillity is once more restored to these much-ravaged & desolated Provinces. It would amaze You to hear what Diamonds, Rubies & Gold Mohurs (coins) have been offer'd to Lady Clive because she has not sign'd Covenants! However, I have refused any thing, and have supported my Dignity & kept up my Integrity in the Midst of 10,000 Temptations. . . . Never was such a Scene of Anarchy & Confusion, Bribery, Corruption & Extortion seen or heard of as hath been exhibited in the Bengall Dominions. . . . However, I have made a great Progress towards demollishing these great & growing Evils." [13] In communicating with his father, Clive declared that he had sent the Company "the most important News they ever received; and if they are not satisfy'd with mine & the Committee's Conduct, I will pronounce there is not one Grain of Honour or Integrity remaining in England." [14]

"You are now become the Sovereigns of a rich & potent Kingdom," he informed Rouse & Company; and they were apparently satisfied, for they replied: "When We consider . . . every Englishman throughout the Country . . . exercizing his Power to the Oppression of the helpless Natives, . . . at such a Crisis We can not hesitate to approve your obtaining the Devaunee [proprietorship of Bengal] for the Company." [15]

And Orme, at work in Madras on Volume II of his monumental history, received this note: "Fortune seems determined to accompany me to the Last. Every Object, every sanguine Wish, is upon the Point of being compleatly fulfill'd; and I am arrived at the Pinnacle of all

[13] *Clive Papers.*
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Ibid.; E.I.C. Records.*

I covet, by affirming the Co. shall (in spite of all Envy, Malice, Faction & Resentment) acknowledge They are become the most opulent Co. in the World by the Battle of Plassey; and Sir Hanniball Hotpot [Sulivan] shall acknowledge the same." [16]

Fortune did not favor Sháh 'Álem. When it ceased to smile on Clive, it frowned at him also. Several years later, Delhi was again seized by the Afghans; and a bloodthirsty Pathan chieftain, Ghulám Qádir Khán, dragged the young Mughal from his throne, gouged out his eyes, cut off his testicles, and branded him as a slave. Ghulám Qádir later paid for this atrocity by having his nose, ears, genitals, hands, and feet cut off by the *Gáékvár* or Maratha prince of Baroda, Madhají Sindhiyá, who wrested Delhi from him. Sindhiyá, "of implacable revenge," presented the mutilated Qádir to the mutilated 'Álem in a cage; thus demonstrating that the Indian political system of "despotism tempered by assassination" had been tempered by British influence to "absolutism tempered by mutilation." [17]

Incidental to Clive's ceremonial visit to Allahabad, there is a scandalous anecdote related (on Murád's authority) in the *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí* which demonstrates the insidious nature of Grand Vizier Shujá'uddawleh Khán and the fabled profligacy of Clive. Muhammed Akber, Sháh 'Álem's heir apparent, was then a boy of about five; and in order to weaken his character and destroy his capacity to rule, the Vizier had been secretly subjecting his little body to carnal abuse by depraved eunuchs and courtiers. Observing the child continually fingering his penis, the Emperor thought best to have his son circumcised before he became addicted to "a bad habit." It was not the custom for Mughals, in deference to Hinduism, to deprepucize the male offspring of their Hindu wives or concubines; but an exception was made for young Akber, though his mother was a Hindu princess. In honor of Clive's arrival, Sháh 'Álem brought his son with him from Delhi for a grand circumcision ceremony. It was a noisy spectacle, and the prince lost his prepuce in a screaming fit. Clive, pleading illness, did not attend. "And with good reason," states the chronicler, who was perhaps not aware of Clive's apparent anxiety neurosis in regard to "mutilation." For it seems that on the previous night, while Clive was in his private chamber, Muhammed Akber was sent to him

[16] *Orme Papers.*
[17] *Táríkh-i-Mansúrí.*

by the Vizier; that Clive, not knowing his identity, permitted the apparent catamite to perform fellatio and masturbation (*qurt-o-jelq*, gulping and jerking) upon him; and that Clive, though aroused by the boy's ardent fondling, refused his persistent invitations to anal penetration (*ubneh*, buttockry) for fear he might injure him. Murád, who observed all this, later found out and informed his master that the "catamite" (*ma'bún*, bungholer) was none other than Muhammed Akber, which caused Clive to shorten his stay by several days on plea of ill-health.

Clive pushed through the much-needed reforms as soon as he reached Fort William on September 6. To end the evils of private trade, a government-supervised syndicate of merchants (The Bengall Society for Trade) was established; and the enforcement of fixed prices prevented wholesale exploitation and extortion. Other controls eliminated individual profiteering, and combinations in restraint of (Indian) trade which had turned free enterprise into a free-for-all. In the words of its founder, "The Bengall Society for Trade destroy'd every Idea of Monopoly." [18] He added proudly: "History can scarce furnish an Instance of any Subject who hath had such Opportunity of acquiring an immense Fortune . . . notwithstanding the Obligations in the new Covenants; for the Man who can so easily get over the Bar of Conscience as to receive Presents . . . will not scruple to make Use of any Evasions that may protect him from the Consequence." [19]

Incensed at the imposed restrictions, the Calcutta merchants raised another storm of protest when Clive called for honest and experienced officials from Madras. Clive then denounced the Calcutta merchants as "shameless, foolish, childish, knavish, abandon'd & ungratefull," and declared there were "not 5 Men of Principle in the whole Settlement" and that there had been "a Combination between the Blacks & Whites [of Calcutta and Murshidabad] to divide all the Revenues of the Co. between them." [20] Conditions were so corrupt that Clive facetiously proposed that Capuchin friars collect the taxes of Bengal; "tho' I expect they would steal also, in the Name of the Church!" [21]

[18] *Orme Papers.*
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] *Pigot Papers.*
[21] *Ibid.* (quoted by Caraccioli).

"Clive is really our King," one Calcutta councilor put it. "His Word is Law, and . . . he laughs at Contradictions." Another termed his dictatorship "the Triumph of Ambition, Hypocrisy & Fraud." And a third has recorded: "The subjugating Maxims that were adopted have been attended with extra-ordinary Success, for there is not . . . a Civillian that . . . dares so much as hint his Disapprobation of any Measure without being prepared to encounter Suspension." [22]

"The real Truth of the Matter is," Clive retorted, "that the Relaxation of Gov't for some Years past has introduced so much Luxury, Extravagance, Independency & Indolence into Bengall that every Effort upon our part to reclaim this Settlement is look'd upon as a Hardship or an Act of Injustice." [23] To a devoted friend and fellow Whig, Prime Minister George ("The Gentle Shepherd") Grenville, he wrote:

> *Upon my Arrival, . . . the Company's Affairs were at their last Gasp; . . . Extortion & Corruption were practiced openly & at Noonday; the Kingdom of Bengall (whose Revenues amount to £4,-000,000 Sterling per annum) had been put up to Sale, and the Profits divided among the Civil & Military. The Co.'s Interests have been most scandallously sacrificed; . . . the Venality, Corruption & Extortions of the Co.'s Servants must give you great Pain, from the Consideration of the National Honour being so much prostituted. . . . They are grown callous, rapacious & luxurious beyond Conception; Licentiousness & a Want of Principle have possess'd their Minds, and Iniquity hath been compounded with Incapacity, causing the most notorious Abuses. . . . However, they shall be brought to Reason & ruled with a Rod of Iron untill I see a Reformation in their Principles & Manners. . . . Altho' tempted on all Sides by Offers of Riches without Bounds, I have refused every thing; and I am the greatest Villain upon Earth if either I or any one dependent upon or belonging to me, with my Knowledge, either directly or indirectly benefit ourselves the Value of One Farthing. . . . In short, I will pronounce Calcutta to be the most Wicked Place in the Universe; . . . I have undertaken a most disagreeable & odious Task; . . . I am become the Slave of the Co. & the Detestation of Individuals, and my Constitution can not bear it long.*[24]

[22] *Orme Papers.*
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] Grenville, George: *Papers.*

Though they lived in what was called the Age of Enlightenment, eighteenth-century Englishmen relished cruel sports. London had cockpits and bear gardens frequented by perfumed fops and painted dolls, but Calcutta boasted an arena where huge beasts engaged in duels to the death. As the Grand Mughals and their Nevábs had done the European conquerors and colonists watched tiger and buffalo, elephant and rhinoceros, tangle in ferocious and bloody combat. Whenever he felt under stress, Governor Clive would order and attend a *tumasha* or "spectacle," complete with fireworks and betting and human casualties. We are told, however, that "these fashionable Amusements gave him no real Pleasure or Satisfaction"; that despite the momentary emotional release, he got no lasting peace of mind.[25]

"How should the Devil himself overtake you, running at such a rate?" So exclaimed Colonel Carnac to Governor Clive, who contented himself with no more than three hours' sleep out of twenty-four; who drove himself relentlessly, endeavoring to "clean the stable" and settle all affairs before the end of the year, when he hoped to head for home, at quits forever with the Land of Regrets. A race against time: a race he could not win. Toward the end of October, 1766, he had driven himself to the point of collapse.

"Is life worth living? It depends on the liver!" Clive was struck down by a bilious remittent fever that left him jaundiced by a liver disorder. He was incapacitated for more than a month; and he never fully recovered. Repeated and at times excessive doses of opium left him sexually impotent. Laughing fitfully, he remarked to young Dr. Samuel Ingham, his personal physician: "The gods, says Plato, have given us one disobedient and unruly member that like a furious animal attempts by the violence of its appetite to subject all things to it. Mine, however, is become a nerveless droop! It will not be roused, neither by thought nor hand, and I fear it may fail me in a time when I shall have great need of it." He then added,with an appropriate quote from Martial, that though he be *hors de combat* regarding active exploits of amorous exercise: *Nemo est senex ad irrumandum* (No man is too old to be mouthed).

" 'Tis but your new ailment," Ingham assured him. "One complaint breeds another. You'll feel fit again, once you've expelled the bile."

[25] Caraccioli.

"Aye, but I expect the cure is worse than the disease. Opium has unmanned me, I say!" [26]

While Clive lay impotent in his sickbed in Calcutta, the gossip of London had him indulging in sexual orgies. Sulivan, Vansittart, the Johnstone brothers, and their vengeful crew had opened a whispering smear campaign against the Great Nabob. Fornication and adultery were not enough; perversion was the theme. Clive was charged with every carnal sin known to man, including bestiality. Even such hideous Hindustani epithets as *máchód* (motherfucker) and *bétíchód* (daughterfucker) were hurled at him. "Clive is a pederast," 'twas said. He allegedly engineered the assassination of Najmuddawleh for having repelled his amorous advances, in favor of the manipulatable boy fairy, Sayfuddawleh, whom he freely buggered and otherwise abused. "Clive is a sodomite," 'twas rumored. Because of his lavish tips and purported penchant for fellatio, he was pictured as the "sugar daddy" of Muslim homosexuals; and these lines of Catullus were applied to him:

> *"O Memmi, bene me ac diu supinum*
> *tota ista trabe tentus irrumasti."*
> *Sed, quantum video, pari fuistis*
> *casu: nam nihilo minore verpa*
> *farti estis.*
>
> ("O Memmius, always lying with your limb
> outstretched for me to chew!"
> Which was to my own benefit, except
> that I was stuffed from eating
> circumcised meat.) [27]

Clive's "cunt-hunts" were flagrant and notorious. He was said to have used Dr. Ingham, his Musalman servant Murád Khudádád, and others as his procurers or "pimps in ordinary," and had seduced and debauched every female, European or Hindu, within his reach. Clive reportedly propositioned every attractive Mem-Sahib in Bengal, leaving billets-doux on dozens of toilette tables. When rebuffed he resorted to Hindu sluts—and even little girls and boys.[28] "Clive [by his

[26] Ingham, Dr. Samuel: *Journal.*
[27] *Intrigues of a Nabob* (Latin only is quoted herein).
[28] *Ibid.*; Caraccioli.

circumcision] is become a Shylock, has turned Turk." . . . "Clive is a fiendish satyr, the vilest of humanity, whose bloody yard [penis] is ever on the stretch." . . . "Clive hath free entry into every Moorish whorehouse, where none but the circumcised are welcome." . . . "Clive is riddled with pox and is grown impotent by his excesses," the tongues wagged.[29]

Clive laughed when he learned of this smear campaign—"dirty work at the crossroads," he called it.[30] As Jack Carnac wrote confidentially to Sam Ingham: "Pardon me, Sir, but none was more fluted & stript [fellated and masturbated], nor frigg'd & bugger'd themselves nigh to Death when in Bengall, than were Messrs. Van & Johnstone & Co.; yet they accuse Clive of their own Corruption, tho' Illness & Opium have made him impotent. A clear Case of the Pot & the Kettle, I dare say!" [31]

Clive's bilious fever was aggravated by fits of melancholia or "black bile"; and he reached a pitch of hysteria. Maskelyne, Strachey, and Ingham often had to hold or tie him down to the bed, lest he do violence to himself. Superstitious servants fled the house, fearful of evil spirits, so that the three men were obliged to attend Clive by turns day and night. Savage screams and hysterical laughter, delirious jabbering and convulsive sobs, echoed through the empty mansion: now a private madhouse for the lone madman.

The spasms passed, as they had come, with weeping; and in a fortnight, Clive had recovered his senses if not his health. Colonel Carnac wrote to Lady Clive in December: "It grieved me beyond Measure to see a Person endued with such extra-ordinary Firmness so opprest in his Spirits as to exceed any Degree of Hystericks I was ever Witness to." [32] Clive himself wrote (January 1, 1767) of "my Recovery from a Nervous Attack which I thought I could not survive, it being so much beyond what I suffer'd even in England. Indeed, I am persuaded nothing but Opium could have saved me: the Spasms being so strong that I was obliged to take 15 Grains in 24 Hours." [33]

January 16. Robert Clive shambled into the council chamber at

[29] *Intrigues of a Nabob.*
[30] *Ingham Journal.*
[31] *Ibid.* (insert).
[32] *Clive Papers.*
[33] *Ibid.*

Fort William and tendered his resignation to the secretary. "I cannot survive," he said, "and be of use to the Company in India another year." [34] Clive had arrived on "a Scene of the most tyrannick & oppressive Conduct that ever was known in any Age or Country." He departed in an atmosphere of law and order; and (in the words of Edmund Burke) "the Plan which he laid down, and the Course which he pursued, were in general great and well-imagined. He settled great Foundations, display'd great Powers of Organization. Ah, if only they had been adhered to!" [35] Clive left British India at the end of January, without regret, out of pocket by exactly £5,816. But the cost was to be still greater—his life.

[34] *Sykes Journal.*
[35] *Burke Papers.*

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THE WICKED LORD

Clive reached London in mid-July of '67. After three years' absence, he and his fellow travelers found that Merrie Olde England was no longer merry. George III was going mad; the English people were going hungry and rioting; the American colonies were demanding: "No taxation without representation." Even the well-beloved man of the people, the Great Commoner recently dubbed 1st Earl of Chatham by a grudging monarch, was stricken (like Lord Clive) with melancholia or manic-depressive insanity, the mysterious "black bile" or grand English madness (*grand mal anglais*).

Wallowing in wealth, thanks to Clive's reformation, the Directors and Proprietors of the Honourable East India Company demonstrated their gratitude by enshrining a larger-than-life-sized statue of the Great Nabob at the East India House in Leadenhall Street. Clive was flattered; but it pleased him more when they reluctantly sanctioned

his lifelong right to the controversial *jágír*, in "gratefull Acknowledgement of your eminent Services." [1] King George welcomed Lord Clive in private audience, and was pleased with Clive's tokens of esteem. According to the Great Gossip, Horace Walpole, the tokens included "2 Diamond-drops, worth £12,000, for ye Queen; a Scimitar, Dagger & other Matters, cover'd with Brilliants, for ye King & worth £24,000 more; to say nothing of a whole Menagerie, a Baby Elephant & other Beasts, for ye Royal Family." [2] His Majesty commissioned Clive a Major General in the Royal Army and appointed him "King's Counsell on India Affairs, with a Promise of His Countenance & Protection in every thing I might attempt for the Good of the Nation & the Comp'y." [3] Through the influence of Sir William Blackstone, he became an honorary doctor of laws; and hailed as "Arbiter of Empire and the Richest Subject in Europe," Clive was made a fellow of the Royal Society of London for the Advancement of Art and Science, which struck a medal in his honor to commemorate Plassey.

Grenville had written Clive on July 23 of "the Satisfaction which You must receive in knowing the Sense which the Publick in general & every Good Man entertains of your ever-memorable Services in India." [4] Clive replied: "Many are at greater Pains, from rank infernal Jealousy & Envy, to conceal & lessen my Services in order to lessen my Influence; but I thank God I am now an Independent Man, what I was determined to be at all Events. . . . My Conduct [in India] wanted no Support; it supported itself, because it was disinterested & tended to nothing but the Publick Good." [5]

The palatial home in Berkeley Square, furnished with the lavish elegance befitting the greatest nabob in Europe, was ablaze with festivity till Lord and Lady Clive escaped to the restful waters of Bath. There, according to Caraccioli, Clive raised his sunken spirits by pursuing the "naughty pack." But he does not appear to have been very successful, for the stay was an unusually short one. "My Health has been very indifferent ever since my Arrival," he wrote to his successor (Henry Verelst) at Calcutta.[6] So when the freezing, foggy ele-

[1] *Clive Papers.*
[2] *Walpole Letters.*
[3] *Orme Papers.*
[4] *Clive Papers.*
[5] *Grenville Papers.*
[6] *Orme Papers.*

ments turned London into an ordeal, Clive followed the sun in a grand tour of the Continent. Friend Grenville was informed that "This Journey, I am frankly told, is the only Chance I have for a perfect Recovery." [7]

Lord Clive was received in Paris (of all places!) like a national hero. He was entertained by Marquis de Bussy, a self-styled *victime de circonstance*. Clive said to him: "Messire Dupleix' craft and policy had given to the French a great ascendancy over the country powers, whom he began to divide in order to rule over them. You forced us to counterbalance the arts of French finesse by an army more formidable than either you or us had ever sent into India. In this mutual struggle for the empire of the East, we were more fortunate than you; and as rivals-in-arms, we thought our victories inadequate to our expectations if we did not prevent your future settlement in the Bengal provinces."

Bussy replied: "Well and good; but you cannot flatter yourselves to remain the absolute rulers of Hindustan. All the natives of that country know their Nevábs—even the Mughal himself—are mere puppets, the tools of your uncontrolled power and dominion. Expect another revolution, milord." [8]

While in Paris, *le grand Nabab* pursued *les femmes;* and, connivingly cognizant of his fabulous fortune, *les grandes dames* ran after *le goddam retaillé*. Among his conquests (according to Caraccioli, *Intrigues of a Nabob,* and *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*) were the notorious *filles de l'opéra*, Marie-Madeleine Guimard, "who [says Dr. Ingham] doubtless afflicted His Lordship with the Case of Clap so lately complain'd of by all her noble Amateurs," and Mlle. Clairon (Claire-Josèphe-Hippolyte Léris de La Tude), whose lovers included the Marquis de Bussy, the Duc de Luxembourg, and the Prince de Soubise. These complemented Clive's casual affairs in Covent Garden with actresses Peg Woffington (Garrick's mistress), George-Anne Bellamy (Wedderburn's mistress), and Kitty Clive (cousin George's ex-wife and Walpole's mistress). Perhaps his most talked-of liaison was with the young wife of septuagenarian Louis-Charles-César Le Tellier, Marquis de Courtanvaux et Duc d'Estrées, who wrote to one of her *confidantes: "Lord C., un nabab anglays, s'amusé à mon divan. Il*

[7] *Grenville Papers.*
[8] Caraccioli.

fourre très bon, est retayllé à la juive, quy excite la curiosité. Je l'écorcheray." (Lord C., an English nabob, amused himself on my couch. He pokes very well, is clipped like a Jew, which excites curiosity. I will milk him.) [9]

According to Caraccioli and others, Clive fornicated his way through Southern Europe. However, Caraccioli cautions that we "must not judge by the Multiplicity of Adventures His Lordship had with Women that he was an Hercules; he wanted new Objects to sharpen his Appetites, and none answer'd the Cravings of his Imagination." The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states that Clive's marriage was "a happy one," and that "the scandalous stories of his private life spread later by his enemies are devoid of foundation."

Such wishful thinking is characteristic of English prudery, but is hardly supported by evidence. Clive's marriage was happy insofar as he was conventionally devoted to his wife and children, whom he indeed loved after a fashion, but his satyriasis and melancholia were too well known. "If Opportunity offers," Ingham reveals, "His Lordship will indulge his Desire for Laced Mutton; if not, he will content himself with Her Ladyship or retire to his Toilette-room & mastuprate. 'Tis no Exaggeration to say, His Lordship hath one of the most abused Membrums in Europe, for that he is afflicted with Priapism [satyriasis, persistent erections and excessive desires] & must spend his Semen or go out of his Wits." From the number of children and miscarriages on record, it would appear that Clive's wife was perennially pregnant and therefore he had very little sex with her.

Clive's erotic exploits in Paris also took him into that city's Sodom where so-called hellfire clubs had adopted as their motto Rabelais' "*Fay ce que vouldras*" (Do what you please). This had its parallel, as we have seen in London. Indeed, James I, Charles I, and William III had not been averse to *le vice contre nature*. And Smollett, in *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), noted that "Paederasty gains Ground apace, and in all Probability will become in a short Time a more fashionable Device than Fornication." As a member of the Mad Monks of Medmenham Abbey, Clive, representing "Mahomet," is said to have been ceremoniously fellated by Thomas Potter (representing Holy Roman Emperor Heraclius) and the Reverend John

[9] *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses.*

Kidgell (representing Pope Honorius I); whereupon, in furtherance of his initiation, Clive had ritually analized and masturbated Potter and Kidgell by turns: "in Token of the abject Submission and vile Embuggerment of His Holiness and His Highness by the Prophet of the Circumcized." [10]

In Paris, Lord Clive was initiated into the secret Order of Sodomites, *La Sainte Congrégation des Glorieux Pédérastes* (The Sacred Fraternity of Glorious Pederasts), founded in the seventeenth century by the court composer Jean-Baptiste Lully: dubbed *Le Roi de Sodome*, "King of Sodom." Clive's sponsor was Louis-François-Joseph de Bourbon, Prince de Conti, who facetiously introduced him to the *clique* as "Baphomet," priapic idol of the medieval Knights Templars. The *confrérie de sodomie* paid homage to their distinguished guest by a performance of ritual fellatio in which *"le gros goddam satyrique les souffrit le sucer à l'excès"* (the gross satyric Goddam suffered them to suck him to excess); whereupon *"bougrerie en cercle"* (round-robin sodomy) was enacted. Clive, though *"sucé jusqu'à la moelle"* (sucked to the very marrow), was apparently stiff enough (*rayde comme une barre de fer*, "stiff as a poker,") to link himself in the circular chain of flesh. When he began to droop with exhaustion (*tomber avec l'épuisement*), the Great Nabob was ceremoniously masturbated (*manipulé selon le rite*) by none other than that dynamic young rakehell and *pétard* of the French Revolution, Honoré-Gabriel-Victor Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau, who was aptly called *Le Retaillat Furieux* (The Savage Clipcock) because he had recently suffered circumcision owing to *"un prépuce resserré et enflammé"* (a tight and inflamed foreskin): doubtless a consequence of his priapic and violent nature.[11] Mirabeau and Clive were much alike—brilliant, fearless, passionate, amoral. Both died from burning the candle at both ends, and each was the black sheep of a tyrannic father. It is even apparent, from his *Errotika Biblion*, that Mirabeau, like Clive, supplemented compulsive copulation with compulsive masturbation. That he and his English counterpart should have met, *penem in anum*, was a quirk of fate.

"The Travelling & Climate have undoubtedly done me much Good," Clive wrote to cousin George, his chief financial agent. While

[10] *Intrigues of a Nabob.*
[11] *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses; Intrigues of a Nabob.*

at Spa, enjoying the mineral springs and gallanting the *demimondes*, Clive received this reply: "It gives great Satisfaction to your Friends on this Side of the Water to hear the surprizing Accounts of your Recovery, and I hope you will never have Occasion for the Opium." [12] So Clive hoped as well, for opium left him sexually impotent and emotionally distraught.

On Clive's return to London in the fall of 1768, he learned that William Johnstone had just inherited a fortune from his wife's cousin William Pulteney, the Earl of Bath. Johnstone now swaggered as "William Johnstone Pulteney, Gent., M.P."; and, abetted by his six brothers, he swore to use his inheritance to bring down the Great Nabob. While Clive had been selling his Company stock to buy land, Johnstone (alias Pulteney) had bought up a controlling interest in the Company. In their mania for revenge, he and his brothers bought the Right Honorable Chairman (Rouse), the Court of Directors, and all the Proprietors not directly connected with Clive. Having captured the East India House they disposed of Clive's statue like a piece of junk.

Johnstone & Co. also bought members of Parliament, and hired Grub Street hacks to smear dirt on "The Wicked Lord" and "The Vile Nabob." Even the unbought journalists of Fleet Street hopped on the anti-nabob bandwagon, and pamphlets and gazettes echoed the sentiments of Lord Chatham: "There has been an Influx of Wealth into this Country which has been attended by many fatal Consequences, because it has not been the regular natural Produce of Labour and Industry. The Riches of Asia have been pour'd in upon us, and have brought with them not only Asiatick Luxury but, I fear, Asiatick Principles of Government. Without . . . any natural Interest in the Soil, the Importers of foreign Gold have forced their Way into Parliament by such a Torrent of private Corruption as no . . . Fortune could resist." [13] Clive, the richest and greatest of all nabobs, thus became (in the public mind) a personification of "the root of all evil" and the stock example of filthy-rich decadence. He was "King of Vice and Corruption"; he was "the great, wicked Lord that sold his Soul to the Devil." He was "a monstrous Mogull" whose "shame-

[12] *Clive Papers.*
[13] *Chatham Papers.*

less Extravagance" scandalized the good character of Great Britain.[14]

"Unlimited power is apt to corrupt the minds of those who possess it," Lord Chatham opined; and Lord Clive was held suspect. " 'Twas easier to conquer India than to know what to do with it," quipped Horace Walpole; "so, 'twas agreed upon to sell the descendant of Tamerlane [Sháh 'Álem] for money and then buy up both Houses of Parliament in the bargain." [15] When asked to justify the annexation of Bengal, Clive replied sharply: "We took what was ours by right of conquest, and the right of conquest has no foundation other than the right of the strongest." [16] His argument was that of Ben Franklin: "If a Sparrow cannot fall without God's Knowledge, how can an Empire rise without His Aid?" Indeed, empires were made by "divine Madness, contrary to all Reason."

"I say, m'Lud," Walpole accosted Clive, "is it true that in India money grows on trees? I have just got wind of a so-called pagoda tree, which yields golden fruit, and that to shake the pagoda tree is to harvest a rapid fortune. Pray tell me more of this fabulous growth."

"My dear Sir," Clive retorted, "you wonder why Britons have dirty ears? You've been talking in them for twenty years!"

"Wally" bowed and handed Clive a booklet: *The Intrigues of a Nabob; or, Bengall the Fittest Soil for the Growth of Lust, Injustice, and Dishonesty (Dedicated to the Rt. Honble. Robt. Lord Clive & Co.).*[17] "How my achievements mock me!" Clive said to Ingham. "This long disease: my life!" [18] Disillusioned with "so weak & selfish an Administration," now run by the Duke of Grafton, who sacrificed affairs of state "for a Whore & a Horse-race," Clive retired from "the Bustle & Noise of a debauch'd & half-ruin'd Nation." [19] He retained his seat in Parliament, but did not attend. He dismissed the Court of Directors as "mean, sneaking, cowardly, envious & jealous," and branded the Court of Proprietors "a Bear-garden ever full of Noise, Intrigue, Confusion & Anarchy." [20] His enemies gained a fresh victory

[14] *Intrigues of a Nabob; Malcolm's Anecdotes; Walpole Letters.*
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.*
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *Ingham Journal.*
[19] *Walpole Letters; Orme Papers.*
[20] *Ibid.*

when Laurence Sulivan was re-elected Company Chairman in the spring of '69, declaring: "If I could not clearly confute his [Clive's] Reasoning, I should wish our Trade to India at an End." [21]

[21] *Ibid.*

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* 42 *

CLIVE'S DEFENDERS

Fed up with the villainous Vansittart administration, depressed over the loss of his wife and two children to a cruel climate, Warren Hastings had resigned as Resident at Murshidabad and left India in December of '64. Back in London he led the life of a parasitic intellectual, then neither uncommon or disreputable. One of his favorite resorts was the lavish table of Lord Clive. There as elsewhere he paid the expected fee of good conversation, which in his case took a cynical turn. The author of *Intrigues of a Nabob* avers that he refused to join the Hell-Fire Club, not because of his aversion to venery or to certain of its members (e.g., Vansittart and Coote) but because he was ashamed of his circumcision "and did not wish his rakish Friends to call him 'Clip-cock' behind his Back, as they did the Wicked Lord." When bathing in "The Hummums" of Covent Garden, Hastings made himself ridiculously conspicuous by covering his loins with a towel while other young blades paraded in the nude, "their unclipt Pendules proudly dangling." Such exaggerated modesty is the more laughable when one considers that The Hummums, London's most fashionable bathhouse-hotel, was notorious both as a brothel and a hangout for homosexuals. "What is he hiding?" Carnac inquired. "Nothing!" Clive answered. Sykes begged to differ: "Nay; a stretcher [large penis], m'Lud, but badly carved [circumcised.[1] "Carved meat" was colloquial for a deprepucized penis]."

[1] *Sykes Journal.*

Clive was urged to help rekindle the spark of aspiring and idealistic youth, to make a new man of Mr. Hastings. "He is allmost literally worth Nothing," Sykes informed him, "and must return to India or want Bread." [2] Clive was glad to help one who had dared term the Court of Directors "a Mine of oppressive Rapacity." [3] And so Hastings headed for Madras, "where he shall be surrounded by Men of Principle & Integrity," there to be groomed for the governorship of Bengal. "Gramercy to Clive," Dr. Johnson exclaimed, "Hastings is back at work: a new man, with a new lease of life."

"*What!*" blurted James ("Bozzy") Boswell. "Defending the nabob?"

"Sir, are you so grossly ignorant of human nature as not to know that a man may be very sincere in good principles without having good practice? Besides, he feeds us." [4]

On the voyage, Hastings fell in love with the charming and cultured wife of a German soldier of fortune turned miniaturist. *Frau* was captivated by Hastings' penetrating mind and she abandoned her inattentive spouse. The two lovers were married at Fort St. George. Clive remarked in jest: "I never heard of Hastings having any abilities except for seducing his friends' wives!" [5]

When Governor Verelst resigned under pressure in January of 1770, Mr. Sulivan appointed his old crony Mr. Vansittart to take the reins of government once again: "adding Insult to Injury," as Clive expressed it.[6] But Providence interposed with a disastrous storm. Vansittart's frigate went to the bottom of the Indian Ocean, with all aboard. Among them were Luke Scrafton and Colonel Francis Forde, appointed Vansittart's select committeemen in deference to Clive. Thus, by a stroke of fate, Mr. Warren Hastings became Governor of Bengal. In their letter of commission, the Court of Directors styled him a gentleman of "great Ability and unblemish'd Character," charged to remedy "the general Corruption and Rapacity of our Servants." [7] Hastings pledged himself "to reclaim Men from Dissipa-

[2] *Clive Papers.*
[3] *Hastings Papers.*
[4] *Malcolm's Anecdotes* (see also Boswell).
[5] *Sykes Journal; Intrigues of a Nabob.*
[6] Sykes.
[7] *Hastings Papers.*

tion, to revive a general Spirit of Industry, and to lead the Minds of All from gaudy Dreams of sudden-acquired Wealth to a patient Expectation of growing Fortunes." [8] Clive, in his letter of congratulations, stated that "an Opportunity is now given You of making Yourself one of the most distinguish'd Characters of this Country." [9] Hastings took that opportunity of making a noise in the world, becoming, as Clive's disciple, Governor General of British India.

In time, he too would be denounced. He would hear Edmund Burke thunder in Parliament: "I impeach him in the name of the Commons' House of Parliament, whose trust he has betrayed; in the name of the English nation, whose ancient honor he has sullied; in the name of the people of India, whose rights he has trodden under foot and whose country he has turned into a desert. Lastly, in the name of human nature itself, in the name of both sexes, in the name of every age, in the name of every rank, I impeach the common enemy and oppressor of all!" [10] Hastings was impeached and tried for seven years (1788–95) on trumped-up charges of misconduct in office, but was finally acquitted.

George Grenville recommended an old friend, the lawyer Alexander Wedderburn, to the Great Nabob. Wedderburn, though notorious and controversial, had confirmed Dr. Johnson's observation that "Much may be made of a Scotchman, if he be *caught* young." Trained by actor James Quin and actor-elocutionist Thomas Sheridan (father of Richard), and taking actress George-Anne Bellamy as his doxy, Wedderburn had learned to speak like an Englishman. Leaving Edinburgh, to escape a shotgun wedding (1757), he found patrons in Lord Bute and Mr. Grenville in London. The young shyster served Bute in Parliament to agitate against Liberals. Grenville hired him to silence another political firebrand, John Wilkes. Grenville's (alleged) subsequent homosexual attachment to Wedderburn was rewarded by the lawyer's sellout to Wilkes, who paid more—in coin and, by way of the Hell-Fire Club, cunnus. An abject lover, Grenville, mockingly nicknamed "The Gentle Shepherd" by brother-in-law Pitt, for-

[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Parliamentary History of England.*

gave Wedderburn his infidelity, especially after the King's Friends finally threw Wilkes out of Parliament and into the Tower.[11]

Clive wrote to Wedderburn, soliciting his salable services to burst the bubble of Sulivan's "East India Scheme." Mr. Wedderburn agreed to serve as Lord Clive's mouthpiece if he was returned to Parliament, the influence peddler having lost his seat when Wilkes was ousted and outlawed. Clive persuaded his younger brother William to give up his Bishop's Castle (Shropshire) seat in favor of "Sir Aleck." "This sharper is much in demand," he explained, "and I can't afford to lose him." [12] So it came to pass that the Great Nabob began to fight fire with fire.

Clive even found it advantageous to employ "that goggle-eyed Son of a Bitch," foul-tongued "Black Jack" Wilkes, whose *North Briton* "scandal sheet" was the most virulent anti-Georgian champion of free speech and parliamentary rule in England, and whose *Essay on Woman* (dedicated to his doxy, Fanny Murray) won him great notoriety with such lines as:

> *Awake, my Fanny! leave all meaner things;*
> *This Morn shall prove what Rapture Swiving brings.*
> *Let us (since Life can little more supply*
> *Than just a few good Fucks, and then we die)*
> *Expatiate free o'er that lovèd Scene of Man . . .*

Wilkes favored Clive, another rugged individualist and libertarian, because Clive might do for him what he had done for Wedderburn: lift the ban on his re-entering Parliament. This Clive eventually did, and the nabob was thus assured of the civil-rights crusader's support.

"I'll back myself, with an hour's start, against the handsomest man in England," Wilkes informed Clive; for his uncommon ugliness was, sooth to say, the highest recommendation in the eyes of beautiful women. He then presented his patron with a packet of fancy-laced sheep's-gut condoms of the type fashioned for Charles II by one Colonel Condom of the Grenadier Guards. Clive laughed, comparing the condom to a bad umbrella which a burst of rain can break.[13]

11 *Sykes Journal; Intrigues of a Nabob; Walpole Letters.*
12 Sykes.
13 *Ibid.; Intrigues of a Nabob.*

Dr. Johnson refused to enter Berkeley Square as long as "that vile, cursed, bottomless Whig" was there. "Dine with Jack Wilkes, sir! I'd as soon dine with Jack Ketch" (the notorious hangman).[14] In this connection: "Wilkes," said Lord Sandwich, "you will die of a pox or on the gallows."

"That depends, m'Lud, on whether I embrace your principles or your mistress [Martha Ray]." [15]

It was either Wilkes or "Junius" (Sir Philip Francis) who authored and published *A Vindication of the Character and Conduct of a Noble Lord,* a tongue-in-cheek defense of Clive, "publickly charged with the shocking Crimes of Assassination and Poison." In dismissing John Johnstone's accusation of Clive's implication in the murder of Nevâb Najmuddawleh, the satirist declares that "He might as well reproach an Inhabitant of Clare-market for knocking down a Cow, or sticking a Pig; for Blacks, Mahometans, or Pagans are to be looked upon in the same Light as these Animals, when compared with Whites and Christians." Noting that His Lordship was damned as a tyrant, a plunderer, a forger, a poisoner, and a devil incarnate, the left-handed defender asks: "Where is the Enormity Human Nature is capable of, which hath not been laid to the Noble Person's Charge?" He then philosophizes that "a Creature [Najmuddawleh] shaped at least like a White Man and a Christian," being made to die "the Death of a Rat, is not quite clever; . . . and the only Excuse I can offer in behalf of the Noble Person is that he must then have been a Novice." [16] Enclosed in Clive's copy of this diatribe were several condoms, with this note: "Guaranteed not to burst in a Storm of Abuse, nor yet to split under Pox-like Stricture." [17] In a contemporary work on venereal disease, the virtues of the condom were extolled as "the best, if not the only, Preservative our Libertines have found out at present; and yet by reason of its blunting the Sensation, I have heard some of them acknowledge that they often chose to risque a Clap rather than engage *cum Hastis sic clypeatis* [with shaft thus shielded]." Clive was apparently of that ilk, for he seems to have had a record number of claps and poxes!

[14] Boswell.
[15] *Malcolm's Anecdotes.*
[16] Caraccioli; *Intrigues of a Nabob.*
[17] *Ibid.*

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"We have another Scene coming to Light, of a black Dye indeed," Horace Walpole announced.

> *Ye Groans of India have mounted to Heaven, where ye Heaven-born Gen'l Lord Clive will certainly be disavow'd. Oh, my dear Sir, we have out-done ye Spaniards in Peru! They were at least Butchers on a Religious Principle, however diabollical their Zeal. We have murder'd, deposed, plunder'd, usurpt; nay, what think you of ye Famine in Bengall, in which 3 Millions perish'd, being caused by a Monopoly of ye Provisions by ye Servants of ye East India Company? All this is come out, is coming out, unless ye Gold that inspired these Horrors can quash them. Voltaire says Learning, Arts & Philosophy have soften'd ye Manners of Mankind. When Tygers can read, they may possibly grow Tame: but* Man!

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* 43 *

CLIVE THE SCAPEGOAT

Reports of whole villages wiped out by starvation, of parents feeding on their dead children and children devouring their dead parents, of streets, fields, and streams littered with corpses, while Englishmen in Calcutta filled their bellies and profiteered in surplus grain, were enough to blow up a storm of protest from true humanitarians as well as canting hypocrites. "The Hooghly every Day roll'd down Thousands of Corpses close to the Porticoes and Gardens of the English Conquerors," writes one eyewitness, "and the very Streets of Calcutta were block'd up by the Dying and the Dead." [1]

What perpetrated the Great Famine of 1770–71? The failure of the

[1] *Transactions in India.*

monsoon rains and the black-marketeer's corner of stored grain. Ten millions or about a third of the population of Bengal perished. And who was to blame? *Clive!* "I have been held responsible, not only for the Blunders of Men who have violated all the Rules of Gov't I had lay'd down, but also for the Failure of the Heavens to give forth their Rain. . . . Every Species of Callumny was made Use of that Malice could invent." [2]

The conscience of England was ravaged. Robert Orme wrote:

> *The Parliament, in less than 2 Years, will ring with Declamation against the Plunderers of the East.* [*Prophetic words!*] . . . *Why should I be doom'd to commemorate the Ignominy of my Countrymen?* [*Orme was growing disgusted with the writing of his monumental history, which the Johnstone brothers alluded as "Orme's* Miracles of Lord Clive."] . . . *I shall not relate All the Springs of Action: the Money Story that has accompanied every Event since the 1st of April, 1757; that is, I shall be a Jesuitical Historian: 2 Terms which Voltaire says are incompatible; for no Jesuit could ever tell a true Tale, much less write a true History.*[3]

Edmund Burke thundered in the House chamber: "The Tartar invasion was mischievous, but it is our protection that destroys India. . . . There is nothing before the eyes of the natives but an endless, hopeless prospect of new flights of birds of prey and passage, with appetites continually renewing for a food that is continually wasting. Every rupee of profit made by an Englishman is lost forever to India. . . . The golden cup of abominations—the chalice of fornications, of rapine, usury, and oppression—which was held out by the gorgeous Eastern harlot, was drained to the very dregs." [4]

Pitt (Lord Chatham) also inveighed against "that rapacity, plunder, and extortion which is shocking to the feelings of humanity and disgraceful to the national character. . . . India teems with iniquities so rank as to smell to earth and heaven." [5] To which Walpole added: "Such a Scene of Tyranny & Plunder has been open'd up as makes one shudder."

[2] *Orme Papers.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Parliamentary History of England.*
[5] *Ibid.*

The British press was loud in its damnation of "That Horrible Society," "The Plunderers of the East," "The Robbers and Murderers," "Perpetrators of every Species of Crime that could disgrace the Human Character." Hon'ble Company, "whose Merchants are Princes," was lost to all sense of honor. And the finger of divine wrath was pointed at its covenanted servants: "Where thy treasure is, there will your heart be also."

> . . . *They*
> *Made Britain India: every man that stood*
> *Show'd like a mine.*

Marx said of India: "The aristocracy wanted to conquer it, the moneyocracy to plunder it, and the millocracy to undersell it." Muslim officialdom lived by extortion and persecution of Hindus, and Hindu capitalists sold themselves to English profiteers (for protection) and exploited their own people; and Clive was blamed for it all. Clive was the demon of drought and famine. Under these denunciations Clive dragged himself painfully away from Bath, back to miasmic London, without hope of escape to the Mediterranean for his wretched health, there to defend his acts and his honor.

He returned to find the mansion in Berkeley Square spattered with mud and garbage, its windows shattered by bricks and stones hurled by torch-waving, hooting mobs. Seated in his elegant carriage, the Wicked Lord was scowled at and howled at by those envious of his "filthy lucre" and "vulgar finery." A *great fortune is a great slavery.* He ignored the street ranters, saying: "There is no glory in outstripping asses. Besides, the Hindoos say an honorable man ought to be like the sandalwood, which perfumes the axe that destroys it."[6] When Clive was disposed of a new scapegoat would be found—Hastings.

Alexander Wedderburn, newly appointed Solicitor General (later Lord High Chancellor, "Keeper of the King's Conscience," 1st Baron Loughborough and 1st Earl of Rosslyn), wrote to an associate: "I find he [Clive] has not omitted writing to every Quarter from whence he could expect Assistance, but the popular Opinion is not at present in his Favour."[7]

[6] *Ingham Journal.*
[7] *Orme Papers.*

The "Sulivan-Johnstone Gang" maintained their purchased position in the Company elections of 1770–72. When Parliament met on January 21, 1772, Colonel John Burgoyne motioned that "The most atrocious abuses that ever stained the name of civil government call loudly for redress." He then denounced the servants of the Company, "who make enormous fortunes at the expense of their masters and are guilty of such exorbitances as might hazard the total loss of their valuable possessions." [8]

On March 30, the storm which had long been gathering over Clive's head broke in the halls of Parliament. Laurence Sulivan begged leave to introduce a bill "for the better regulation of the affairs of the East India Company and of their servants in India, and for the due administration of justice in Bengal." [9] It was a mere blind, a ruse to make the Great Nabob the chief target. And it worked. Speeches in support of the bill were aimed directly and indirectly against Lord Clive, who listened in silent fury.

Then he rose to call the bluff of the hypocrites. He did so weakened and in pain, his resonant voice quavering at times:

> *Anarchy and confusion seem to have pervaded every part of the British Empire. In vain can we expect our affairs shall flourish abroad, when all is going to ruin at home. . . . With what confidence can I venture to give my sentiments upon a subject of such national consequence, who myself stand charged with having been the cause of the present melancholy situation of the Company's affairs in Bengal? . . . My enemies will suppose that I was actuated by mercenary motives. But . . . I was determined to do my duty to my country and the Company, under whose auspices I had acquired my fortune and fame.*

(Dr. Johnson, seated beside Mr. Walpole, muttered: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." Wally answered dryly: "Hell is paved with big pretensions." [10]

Clive continued without pause: "I might have put myself at the head of the government as I found it. . . . I might have contrived to return to England with an immense fortune infamously added to the

[8] *Parliamentary History of England.*
[9] *Journals of the House of Commons.*
[10] *Malcolm's Anecdotes.*

one before honorably obtained. . . . But . . . I was determined to do my duty to the public although I should incur the odium of the whole settlement. The welfare of the Company required a vigorous exertion, and I took the resolution of cleansing the Augean stable." (Sulivan and Johnstone sat smugly, arms folded and lips curled.) "It was that conduct which has occasioned the public papers to teem with scurrility and abuse against me, ever since my return to England. It was that conduct which occasioned these charges. But it was that conduct which enables me now, when the day of judgment is come, to look my judges in the face." [11]

William Johnstone (alias William Pulteney) jumped up to charge that all evils were the result of Clive's influence and example. So rancorous was his attack that he alienated most of the House.

On April 13, Sulivan's bill was again introduced: this time by that notorious "Toss-pot & Whore-hound" who was destined to meet his Nemesis at Saratoga, Colonel John ("Gentleman Johnny") Burgoyne of His Majesty's Coldstream Guards. Burgoyne moved that "a select committee be appointed to inquire into the nature, state, and condition of the East India Company and of the British affairs in the East Indies." [12] The motion was carried without opposition, and a House committee of inquiry was thus appointed with Colonel Burgoyne as chairman.

The anti-Clive faction now had the wolf by the ears; for Burgoyne was a mere tool and his committee a kit of tools, assembled by Johnstone & Co. for the destruction of Clive. Burgoyne's rank had been purchased, Clive's had been earned. *It is easy to despise what you cannot get.* Burgoyne had little talent in writing and none in soldiering or statecraft, but was a dabbler in all. A bastard himself, he had fathered bastards. Now he sought to rehabilitate his reputation by ruining Clive's.

His sincerity was a matter of question. He had proposed that hostile Hindustanis (men, women, and children) should be exterminated by being presented with piece goods contaminated with smallpox germs; now he cried out against the violence and oppression practiced on poor Indians by evil Englishmen. Indeed, he would later assail Hastings with equal virulence (attacking character and personality)

[11] *Parliamentary Papers.*
[12] *Journals of the House of Commons.*

to offset his Saratoga fiasco, which lost him the King's favor. For his assuming out-of-character roles Gentleman Johnny's other nicknames would be "Sir Jack Claque," or "Sir Jack Brag."

As chairman of the select committee of inquiry, Burgoyne cross-examined Lord Clive like a Spanish Inquisitor. Why was Ámíchand deceived? "Because one and all considered him in the light of a public enemy, a traitor to the cause." Who formed the fictitious treaty? "I formed the plan for a fictitious treaty." By what right or justification was such a treaty formed? "When Mr. Watts . . . informed me . . . that Omychund had insisted upon 5 per cent of all the Nabob's treasure and threatened, if we did not comply with that demand, he would immediately acquaint Sirajah-Dowlah with what was going on and Mr. Watts should then be put to death, . . . I thought art and policy warrantable in defeating the purposes of such a villain. I therefore formed the plan of a fictitious treaty, to which the Council consented. I never made any secret of it. I thought it warrantable in such a case, and still think so, and would do it again a hundred times." By what right or justification was Admiral Watson's signature forged to that fictitious treaty? "I had no interested motive in doing it, but did it with a design of disappointing the expectations of a rapacious man." Who forged Admiral Watson's signature to the fictitious treaty? "I gave Mr. Lushington leave to sign Admiral Watson's name to the fictitious treaty; and to the best of my remembrance, Admiral Watson gave Mr. Lushington leave to sign his name to the fictitious treaty. . . . I certainly should not have declared that Admiral Watson had consented to have his name put to the fictitious treaty if I had not understood so from Mr. Lushington. But I would have ordered his name to be put, whether he had consented or not."

Then came the loaded question of acquisition of the *jágír*. He responded with perceptible irritation.

> *What injustice was this to the Company? What injunction was I under to refuse a present from him who had the power to make me one as the reward of honorable services? I know of none. I surely had a particular claim, by having devoted myself to the Company's military service and neglected all commercial advantages. What . . . pretense could the Company have to expect that I, after having risked my life so often in their service, should deny myself the only honorable opportunity that ever offered of acquiring a fortune without*

prejudice to them who, it is evident, would not have had more for my having had less? . . . I never sought to conceal it, but declared publicly in my letters to the Court of Directors that the Nabob's generosity had made my fortune easy.

The question then arose, concerning the enormous extent of the *jágír*, "Should a servant be the lord of his master?" To which Clive simply replied: "I call upon the Court of Directors to declare whether they think, without the Battle of Plassey and its consequences, the East India Company would now be in existence." And when Clive was asked by what right or justification he had received from Neváb Ja'fer additional "rewards" for services rendered and rewarded by the *jágír*, the Great Nabob's face reddened as he exclaimed:

When I entered the Nabob's treasury at Murshidabad—with heaps of gold and silver to the right and left, and these crowned with jewels—being under no kind of restraint but that of my own conscience, I might have become too rich for a subject. . . . The Hindoo millionaires, as well as other men of property, made me the greatest offers—which are usual upon such occasions—and had I accepted these offers, I might have been possessed of millions which the present Court of Directors could not have dispossessed me of. But . . . preferring the reputation of the English nation, the interest of the Nabob, and the advantage of the Company to all pecuniary considerations, I refused all offers that were made me.

He concluded:

Am I not rather deserving of praise for the moderation which marked my proceedings? Consider my position. Consider the situation in which the victory at Plassey had placed me. A great prince was dependent on my pleasure. An opulent city lay at my mercy. Its richest bankers bid against each other for my smiles. I walked through vaults which were thrown open to me alone, piled on either hand with gold and jewels. By God, Mr. Chairman, at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation! [13]

But the charges stood, based (in Burgoyne's words) on "accounts of crimes which shock human nature even to conceive." [14] Not even the

[13] *Reports from the Select Committee on the Affairs of East India Company.*
[14] *Ibid.*

alleged castration and subsequent execution of the gatekeeper of Chingleput escaped the probing of the House committee, although it could not be proved that Clive had a hand in it.

Clive was even accused of "taking money from the whores of the city" of Calcutta.[15] One witness testified: "One shamefull Method of adding to the Revenues was of admitting licenced Prostitutes to be under the Company's Protection, by paying a Monthly Tribute." [16] But he was speaking of Vansittart's administration, "scandalized by Whores & Punks," evils for which Clive was held responsible because he was known to frequent public women.

Burgoyne stated: "I look upon the deposing of Sirajah-Dowlah, and the bringing about of a revolution in favor of Meer Jaffer, to be the origin of all subsequent evils which have operated to the temporary distress, if not total destruction, of the Company." He then cited the perfidy employed to realize that revolution, dwelling upon the "disgraceful conduct" of Lord Clive in having forged Admiral Watson's name to a fictitious treaty designed to swindle Ámíchand out of his rightful share of the spoils. He concluded sardonically: "The perfidy of Omychund was of the blackest dye; and as to the proceedings of Lord Clive, I will allow them to be of the whitest kind." [17]

Clive declared in self-defense: "I am accused of not having observed the rules of ethics in my dealings with a notorious scoundrel such as Omychund. It was my duty as a politician to deceive so great a villain. If the whole transaction were to be repeated, I should again enact what the gentlemen are pleased to term forgery or fiction; for so far am I from repenting the part I took in that revolution, that I glory in it as an act in every way conformable to my duty as a servant of that Company whose existence was preserved by the very means I am now to be censured for adopting." His tone now sharpened:

> *Certain people would have me punished for the negotiations leading up to the victory of Plassey and making it possible. They want to confiscate everything which I possess in the world. But I reply: "Per-*

[15] *Ibid.*; Caraccioli; *Intrigues of a Nabob.*
[16] *Orme Papers.*
[17] *Reports from the Select Committee.*

haps I should live more contentedly if I had no more possessions, yet I shall always maintain that my behavior has been irreproachable." Let future generations judge how it is possible that the victor of Plassey should be treated like a sheep-stealer by his own countrymen. The Baron of Plassey, who has acquired for the Company an income of four millions sterling and a trade in proportion! If the authorities had done their duty, the specter of ruin would not now be hovering above our Indian possessions. Now a scapegoat is sought. And who has been chosen for that? I, who cleared out the Augean stable of corruption—and Bengal was nothing less than that—regardless of the fact that I was drawing the enmity of a whole class of people upon myself, those very men who thought they could plunder a nation of thirty millions with impunity. . . . I pushed away the hands full of gold which were stretched out towards me, dammed the flood of corruption which was submerging the country. . . . It was nothing but my duty. The committee have criticized my actions with spiteful meanness, and subjected me to a merciless cross-examination. I have acknowledged all the artifices which I have used; and I say frankly that I am not ashamed of any of the means which I have employed, and that I would employ them again today under the same circumstances.[18]

As the Great Nabob took his seat, Lord Chatham said to Lord Mansfield, " 'Twas one of the most finished pieces of eloquence I've ever heard in the House. He carried the attack clean into the enemy's camp!"

"Aye," the Chief Justice nodded. "He has never spoken with greater eloquence, or with more evil tendency as regards himself." [19]

Another recess of the Parliamentary probe allowed Burgoyne & Committee, financed by Johnstone & Co., to print and broadcast two partisan reports aimed at further prejudicing the public mind against "The Prince of Thieves, Mogull Clive and his Nabobs." But so long as Lord Clive did not lose the King's favor, all honor was not lost. Thanks to Lord North and Mr. Wedderburn, His Majesty was pleased to dub him Knight of the Bath as a token of royal support. With the death of Lord Powis, Solicitor General Wedderburn paid court to the King and wangled out of him another boon for his client.

[18] *Journals of the House of Commons.*
[19] *Malcolm's Anecdotes.*

Clive was installed as Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire, his native county; and before the end of '72, he was bestowed (*pro forma*) the Lord-Lieutenancy of Montgomeryshire in Wales.

"The King was very much affected," Clive wrote of feeble-witted George's expressed concern for him at a private audience.[20] He then cautioned Wedderburn: "Untill my Conduct in Parliam't is decided upon, I do not desire the King & his Ministers to be my declared Enemies. In such a Situation I should certainly not meet with much Applause from the House for my Conduct in the East Indies; and I wish at least that the Members of the House, when they come to decide, may have no other Motive for an unfavourable Decision than Envy. That, indeed, is too strongly implanted in the Human Breast to be removed." He concluded: "*Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat* [Whom God would destroy, He first makes mad] may, with a Vengeance, be apply'd to the Court of Directors." [21]

The words of Bacon haunted Clive: *Who can see worse days than he that, yet living, doth follow at the funeral of his own reputation?* Sleepless nights brought no peace to his tortured mind or strength to his anguished body. He slowly disintegrated in an opium nightmare. Now forty-seven, he had lost most of his natural hair, once luxuriantly brown, now ghostly white. His jaundiced cheeks and furrowed brow, shadowed eyes and tightened lips, were distorting his face into a death mask.

On May 10, 1773, Colonel John Burgoyne stated to the House that "very great sums of money and other valuable property have been acquired in Bengal, from princes and others of that country, by persons entrusted with the military and civil powers of the state by means of such powers; which sums of money and valuable property have been appropriated to the private use of such persons." He then moved that "all acquisitions made under the influence of a military force, or by treaty with foreign princes, do of right belong to the state"; that "grants of valuable property such as Jagheers, by the princes of the country to the servants of the Company, are illegal"; and that "persons who have acquired sums of money by presents or otherwise in India, if they have acquired such sums by virtue of their acting in a

[20] *Clive Papers.*
[21] *Ibid.*

public capacity, should be forced to make restitution." [22] This motion was specifically directed against Clive, and its purpose was to strip him of wealth and prestige. The resolution was carried.

Lord Clive arose in the course of the ensuing debate, saying somewhat wearily:

> *I cannot but lament the abuse that has been made of the public press and the methods resorted to of slandering the character of all orders of men without distinction. For my own part, I have been called a villain, a thief, a forger, an assassin, and names without number; but I need not complain, as even Majesty itself has not escaped this implacable fury. What I regret is that the cause of virtue and public spirit must inevitably suffer if this abuse be permitted to go unpunished, since the greatest inducement to men of superior talent to stand forth and distinguish themselves in their country's cause is the hope of fair fame and just applause.*[23]

Colonel Burgoyne at once replied:

> *The task of a public accuser is never a pleasing, but is sometimes a necessary one. Envy and malignity are the vices of little minds, and I disclaim them. The House, in its movements, have only followed the cry of the public. Instances of rapacity and injustice have occurred in our Eastern possessions, that are known to all the world. An inordinate desire of wealth has had full play, and has led to transactions which have stigmatized those immediately concerned in them and affected even the British name. It is the duty of the House, as guardians of the nation's honor, to apply a remedy; and as the vice has been general, so must the punishment. It is a case in which no partial or limited censure will suffice to remove the evil, or to wipe off the stain from the country. . . . It is therefore necessary to point out who the persons are who have acquired property, and the particular circumstances under which it has been acquired. . . . In the revolution of 1757, effected by Lord Clive, great stress had been laid on its necessity; but every succeeding revolution has been sustained on the same ground, a ground that never will be wanting. . . . Let it be remembered, that the revolution of 1757 was the foundation and the model of all the subsequent revolutions. Our vindictive justice must go back to the origin of the evil. It is in many mouths: the hardship of taking*

[22] *Journals of the House of Commons.*
[23] *Parliamentary History of England.*

up a subject after such a time, and of wresting from a man a fortune valiantly obtained and generously dispensed. If time is to sanctify such offenses, we should bring in a statute of limitation on robbery. Let it not be said that the magnitude of the offense, and the wealth and dignity of the offender, are to be deemed a sufficient justification. . . . Far be it from me to deny to Lord Clive the meed of praise that is due to him. But in coming to a judgment on the grave and serious charges now before the House, all partiality and all prejudice in a man's favor should be laid aside. An act of national justice is called for. It is not to be influenced by wealth or connections, and will be given if a particle of that vital fire that first invigorated this constitution still remains. Imitate the first example of antiquity, and strike when the justice of the state requires it! [24]

On May 17, Burgoyne announced:

It appears to this House that the Right Honorable Robert Lord Clive, Baron of Plassey in the Kingdom of Ireland, about the time of the deposition of Sirajah-Dowlah, Nabob of Bengal, and the establishment of Meer Jaffer on the Musnud [throne], did, through the influence of the powers with which he was entrusted as a member of the Select Committee and Commander-in-Chief of the British forces, illegally obtain and possess himself of two lakhs of rupees as Commander-in-Chief, a further sum of two lakhs and eighty thousand rupees as member of the Select Committee, and a further sum of sixteen lakhs of rupees or more under the denomination of private donation; which sums, amounting together to twenty lakhs and eighty thousand rupees, were of the value in English money of £234,-000; and that, in so doing, the said Robert Lord Clive abused the powers with which he was entrusted, to the evil example of the servants of the public and to the dishonor and detriment of the state.[25]

Flushed with fury, Lord Clive arose and thundered his denunciation:

I am pleading for what is dearer to me than life: my reputation! . . . The mismanagement abroad was founded upon mismanagement

[24] *Ibid.*
[25] *Ibid.*

at home. For these several years past, the Directors—either through ignorance or design—have kept the affairs of the Company a secret. They have rioted at taverns, dissolved in dissipation and luxury, and have entirely neglected their duty. I left India in profound peace, in which it was likely to remain but for the corruption and incompetence of my enemies. . . . What can I say upon the unpardonable remissness of the Administration in neglecting the affairs of the East India Company, yet wishing to avail themselves of its affluence? . . . It has long been tampered with by quacks, even till it was reduced to an absolute consumption, and hath thrown itself upon Parliament as the only true physician that can effect a cure.

He then added:

Much virulence and malevolence have been employed against me, and it is with real concern I find myself reduced to the sad necessity of being the herald of my own fame. . . . Not a stone has been left unturned where the least probability could arise of discovering something of a criminal nature against me. . . . I have been examined by the select committee more like a sheep-stealer than a member of this House. I am sure, if I had any sore places about me, they would have been found. They have probed to the bottom. No lenient plasters have been applied to heal. No; they were all of the blister kind, prepared with Spanish flies and other provocatives. The public records have been ransacked for proofs against me; and the late Deputy Chairman of the East India Company, the Honorable Mr. Pulteney . . . or is it Mr. Johnstone? By God, I cannot say which! . . . at any rate, a worthy member of the House, has been very assiduous indeed: so assiduous in my affairs that really, it appears he has entirely neglected his own. As for punishments, which have been spoken of as necessary, I have a plan to propose which I think may be of great use. The three Jacobite heads which were lately upon Temple Bar have tumbled down, but the poles remain; and as there is no probability of the heads being replaced, for Jacobitism seems to be at an end—at least some people have strangely altered their sentiments and opinions of late years—there can be no further occasion for them on that score. Now I would propose that the heads of three East Indians be stuck up in their stead—in terrorem—and that my head, by way of pre-eminence, be put in the middle. And as His Majesty has given me a title to supporters, you could not pitch more

proper ones than the heads of the late Chairman and Deputy Chairman on the other two poles.[26]

The council chamber echoed with uproarious laughter and applause —at the expense of a scowling Messrs. Sulivan and Johnstone, who were not amused. Nor was Colonel Burgoyne, who remained adamant in his accusation that "Lord Clive left no system of government behind him in Bengal: only the tradition that, with the help of the fear inspired by the English name, unlimited sums could be extracted from the inhabitants." [27]

In the long and heated debate that followed, Lords North and Thurlow seconded Burgoyne's motion to censure Clive. Charles James Fox, pampered and pretentious son of Clive's old standby (Lord Holland), dared to condemn the Great Nabob as "the origin of all plunder, the source of all robbery." [28] Clive burned to hear this, for he knew that Fox had gambled and whored away £150,000 of his "noble" sire's ill-gotten fortune. If Lord Clive was "the model of all plunderers," Lord Holland was the original! Mr. Sulivan then arose and declared: "Though I and the noble lord are enemies, and probably will continue so till the day of our deaths, yet I have never pursued him with the least malevolence—or I should long since have mentioned that His Lordship is the sole cause of our present distress. I would not have mentioned this fact but in the warmth of my temper, when I was unjustly accused." [29] The House applauded, facetiously. Sulivan bowed with a smirk. Lord Chatham wrote of this emotion-charged session: "Lord Clive's Speech was certainly a very able one, but it was not calculated to concilliate Matters. He lay'd about him on all Sides!" [30]

May 19. Robert Clive again came to his own defense.

> . . . *With grave*
> *Aspect he rose, and in his rising seem'd*
> *A pillar of state; . . .*
> *Majestic though in ruin.*

[26] *Ibid.*
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Journals of the House of Commons.*
[30] *Chatham Papers.*

After rendering my country the services which I think I may, without any degree of vanity, claim the merit of—and after having nearly exhausted a life full of employment for the public welfare, and for the particular and advantageous emolument of the East India Company—I little thought transactions of this kind would have agitated the minds of my countrymen in such proceedings as these, tending to deprive me not only of my property and the fortune which I have fairly acquired, but of that which I hold more dear to me: my honor and my reputation. . . . When I was employed by the Company, their affairs abroad were in a condition much to be lamented. Misfortunes attended them in every part of their settlements; and the Nabobs looked with a jealous eye upon the small privileges and possessions they then enjoyed, and though small, in danger every day of being wrested from them. Fear and weakness of power sought for protection from the dangers that surrounded them. In this critical situation I was called forth, and it pleased God to make me the instrument of their delivery.

Clive read two personal letters, from the old Court of Directors, which contained "the most full and satisfactory approbation" of what was termed "the late glorious and profitable Revolution in Bengall." [31]

These are surely sufficient certificates of my behavior and the proceedings of that revolution, and whatever the House may think of them, will remain an everlasting approbation of my conduct from those persons who alone employed me and whose servant I was. . . . After these services, I thought at least I might have enjoyed my fortune uninterrupted and unenvied by those not so rich as myself. . . . After such certificates as these, am I to be brought here like a criminal, and the very best parts of my conduct construed into crimes against the state? Is this the reward that is now held out to persons who have performed such important services to their country? If it is, the future consequences that will attend the execution of any important trust committed to the persons who have the care of it will be fatal indeed. . . . I cannot say that I either sit or rest easy when I find, by the extensive resolution proposed, that all I have in the world is to be confiscated, and that no one will henceforward take my security for a shilling. These are dreadful apprehensions to remain under, and I cannot look upon myself but as a bankrupt. . . . I have not any-

[31] *Clive Papers.*

thing left which I can call my own except my paternal fortune of £500 per annum. . . . But upon this I am content to live, and perhaps I shall find more real content of mind and happiness therein than in the trembling affluence of an unsettled fortune. . . . I have a conscious innocence within me that tells me my conduct is irreproachable. Frangas, non flectes [*You may break, but you shall not bend me*]. . . . *My enemies may take from me what I have. They may, as they think, make me poor. But I will be happy. . . . And before I sit down, I have one request to make to the House: that when they come to decide upon my honor, they will not forget their own.*[32]

Clive's appeal impressed even the most cynical. "I've never heard a finer speech in my life," said Lord Chatham. "They must come to an acquittal. In a political case, the best judgment is that which anticipates the verdict of history. And history will vote for Clive." [33] Indeed, "Let future generations judge how it is possible that the victor of Plassey should be treated like a sheep-stealer by his own countrymen."

The debate was now adjourned till May 21, 1773, when Burgoyne's motion was put to the vote. It was ratified, but not without amendments. Two of Clive's supporters exhorted the House to strike out the two most controversial and condemnatory passages:

(1) . . . through the Influence of the Powers with which he was entrusted as a Member of the Select Committee and Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces . . .

(2) . . . that Lord Clive did, in so doing, abuse the Powers with which he was entrusted, to the evil Example of the Servants of the Publick, and to the Dishonour and Detriment of the State.

It was then bandied about whether His Lordship had received presents "to the detriment of the state" or "to the evil example of others," or whether the resolution should simply state that he received presents. The war of words now reached its crisis; and as the opposition stormed angrily against any alteration of the original resolution, Clive rose from his seat and stalked out of the chamber, uttering: "Take

[32] *Parliamentary History of England.*
[33] *Sykes Journal.*

my fortune, but save my honor." [34] Lord Pigot and Colonel Carnac then launched a counterattack, which was later reinforced by Solicitor General Wedderburn: "For shame! *What!* is this to be the national gratitude for exploits which have been the pride of Britain, the envy of Europe, and the admiration of the whole world? Upon such odious insinuations, are we to raise an envious hand against those laurels which flourish on the brows of men who have done so much? You would now plunder the men to whose bravery, conduct, and unparalleled activity you owe this vast empire." [35]

[34] Sykes, Caraccioli, *et al.*
[35] *Parliamentary History of England.*

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ABSOLUTION

The day had expired; and when Clive stepped into his mansion he felt as if he were entering a mausoleum. He lit a candle, which glowed eerily on the brocaded green walls and gold-fretted ceiling, casting its glimmer on tokens of triumph and glory, now mocking him in cold silence. He stopped to contemplate the large canvases by Veronese and Tintoretto, the Rosas and Vernets for which he had outbid King Stanislas of Poland in a Parisian *salon*, and it pained him to think they might soon incur the approaching fate of his fame and fortune.

Clive sat before the marble fireplace and gazed up at his portrait by Gainsborough. He could not help but wonder at the man he saw, bewigged like a fashion plate and medaled with the Order of the Bath. Was he but a pig in clover, a jackdaw in peacock's feathers?

Why had he left the House, uncertain of the outcome of the most decisive battle of his life, the fight for his honor? Was he afraid? No. For he could declare as Luther declared: "If I had heard that as many devils would set upon me in Worms as there are tiles on the roofs, I should nonetheless have ridden there."

Resolved to end the inquisition once and for all, the Parliamentarians were prompted by Clive's sudden and dramatic departure not to adjourn till everyone was heard who had a mind to speak. Thus the great debate raged throughout the night, till at last the House ruled to reject the two "objectionable" passages by a vote of 155 to 95. Five A.M. The rising sun began to dissolve gray mists hovering over the Thames as Mr. Wedderburn, in husky tones that betrayed his exhaustion, successfully moved that the following clause be appended to the new resolution: "That Robert Lord Clive did, at the same time, render great and meritorious services to his country." [1] The motion was carried unanimously, for everyone was eager to have done and go to bed.

And so ended one of the most remarkable inquiries, or rather inquisitions, in the annals of Parliament. It was Macaulay's opinion that the House acted with "the good sense and good feeling which may always be expected from an assembly of English gentlemen not blinded by faction." [2] And Clive wrote to Hastings on October 14: "A few envious & resentfull Individuals turn'd the whole Attack upon me, and aim'd at the Ruin of my Fortune & Reputation; but the Justice of the House of Commons defeated their Intentions, and by a great Majority, pass'd a Vote that I had render'd great & essential Services to this Country." [3] But the unromantic truth was, as Hastings expressed it, that "There is not Virtue in England for the Punishment of wealthy Villainy." [4] For the just vindication of Clive was, under the circumstances, an unjust vindication of thieves masquerading as public servants. Clive realized this, and it allowed him no peace of mind. Reservedly, he agreed with Cowper:

> *It is not seemly, nor of good Report,*
> *That Thieves at Home must hang: but he that puts*
> *Into his over-gorged and bloated Purse*
> *The Wealth of Indian Provinces, escapes.*

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *Essays* (Clive).
[3] *Hastings Papers.*
[4] *Ibid.*

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DEATH

Officially absolved of all guilt, theoretically secure in the enjoyment of his wealth and honors, presumably relieved from further anxiety as to his future, and seemingly happy in his stroke of luck, Clive laughed at what was to him an anticlimactic travesty, a tragic mockery:

> *That it appears to this House that the R't Hon'ble Robert Lord Clive, Baron of Plassey in the Kingdom of Ireland, about the Time of the Deposition of Sirajah-Dowlah, Nabob of Bengall, and the Establishment of Meer Jaffer on the Musnud, did obtain and possess himself of Two Lacks of Rupees as Commander-in-Chief, a further Sum of Two Lacks and 80,000 Rupees as Member of the Select Committee, and a further Sum of Sixteen Lacks or more under the Denomination of a Private Donation; which Sums, amounting to 20 Lacks and 80,000 Rupees, were of the Value in English Money of £234,000; and that Robert Lord Clive did, at the same Time, render great and meritorious Services to his Country.*[1]

He did not hope for the best, but had resigned himself to the worst; and when Wedderburn came bursting in with the good news, Clive gave a shout of laughter, then sobbed fitfully—then fell into an oblivious and desolate silence. He did not speak, and barely moved, for days. He shut himself off from the world, and from his family. He would not eat, could not sleep. *Sleep!* that great healer of sick souls, of tortured minds, of worn-out bodies. He was lost to sleep, doomed to restless agony. Drugs were his only relief, but brought oblivion, not peace, foretastes of death. . . .

At eight of that fateful morning, May 22, George III had taken pen in hand and scrawled to his bastard half-brother, Prime Minister Fred-

[1] *Parliamentary Papers.*

erick ("Old Blubber") Lord North, 2nd Earl of Guilford: "I owne I am Amazed that Private Interest could make so many forget what they owe their Country, and come to a Resolution that seems to Approve of Lord Clive's Rapine. No One thinks his Services greater than I do, but that can Never be a Reason to commend him in what Certainly open'd ye Door to ye Fortunes we Dayly see made in that Country." [2] Cortés had lost the favor of Charles V, and Dupleix that of Louis XV, and now Clive that of George III. *Censure is the tax a man pays to the public for being eminent.* And kings, fickle in favoritism, levied that tax.

Soon thereafter, Clive received this letter from an officer (Colonel Sir Robert Fletcher) whom he had ousted from India for seditious opposition:

> *Tho' You have escapt the Punishment of Deeds the very Report of which could not be made by Col. Burgoyne without the strongest Marks of Abhorrence & Indignation, You will remain a blasted Monument of the Legislature's Clemency instead of having been made an Example of its Justice. This great Inquest of the Nation, tho' not productive of the Satisfaction the Injured & Opprest had a Right to expect, has, however, open'd the Eyes of the Publick & brought down the mighty Conqueror of Plassey & his Confederates on the Level with a Gang of Free-booters & lawless Speculators.*[3]

When Clive came to himself, he rewarded Wedderburn for his services by presenting him a check for £3000 and a huge Mitcham (Surrey) estate. Other supporters were also handsomely remunerated. Voltaire, intrigued by the Great Nabob and his fabulous life, wrote to Clive from Switzerland and begged of him the necessary documents wherewith to write a history of his career in India. Wedderburn commented, "Whatever Mischief his Works may do for a better State, in this World they are very entertaining; and that Justice which is every where your Due to Fame will have a very good Effect in England, coming from the Pen of a Frenchman writing at the Foot of the Alps." [4]

Clive was flattered, but warily indifferent. "My past is dead and

[2] *Walpole Letters.*
[3] *Maskelyne Papers* (quoted by Caraccioli).
[4] *Clive Papers.*

buried, thank God," he penned in French; "and if it must be resurrected, I shall have no hand in it." [5] He referred the great philosopher to Company historiographer Robert Orme and his monumental work, still in progress, which inclined Voltaire to abandon the whole idea. "All the better!" Clive remarked. "By what I know of Voltaire, he could only have tossed off a scathing screed on the evils of nabobery and the debauchment of India by all Europe." [6]

Months of anguish and anxiety had left Clive broken in spirit. His children were old enough to understand, to feel the sting of his humiliation, and a painful awareness of this aggravated his mortification. His friends thought he suffered from "the Vapours," from "Hypochondria," which he drove away with drugs—in an opium daze. But Clive's case, like Chatham's, was as hopeless as it was hard to diagnose: "his whole System of Nerves destroy'd; some times dying, some times tollerably well; some times crying, at all times incapable of Business." [7] Clive's feverish irritability was disquieting in its cynical expression: "I have only one pleasure in life: the pleasure of not being dead." [8] He brooded in the shadow of gloom, indignant and uncaring, without ears for pleasantry. Walpole, theorizing the cause of Clive's affliction, has written: "Tho' Lord Clive was so frank & high-spirited as to confess a whole Folio of his Machiavellism, they [his persecutors] were so ungenerous as to have a Mind to punish him for Assassination, Forgery, Treachery & Plunder; and it makes him very indignant." Like Dr. Sam, the Great Gossip opined that the nabob's chief ailment was a bad conscience aggravated by the sin of luxury.

The agony of gallstones was alleviated only by drugs, but drugs did not alleviate his fits of depression. Six years before, writing to Harry Strachey from Venice, Clive had said: "I suffer . . . both from the Bile & from my former Nervous Complaint, . . . and I much fear I must be unhappy as long as I live; . . . and in all probability I shall drag on a miserable Life for 15 or 20 Years longer, as I have already done since the Year 1752." [9] Now, writing in early November of 1774,

[5] *Ingham Journal* (*Mon passé, c'est mort & enterré; et si il faut faire revivre, je ne se ferai la main*).

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Strachey Papers.*

he revealed: "How miserable is my Condition! I have a Disease [gallstones] which makes Life insupportable, but which Doctors tell me won't shorten it an Hour." [10]

"What's the matter, sir?" said friend Wedderburn. "You're of late become so pensive, so taciturn and absent, that nothing seems to entertain and amuse you."

"That's true," Clive sighed. "All worldly grandeur can no longer contribute to my happiness. No pleasures can procure me a momentary satisfaction. No object ever so alluring can tempt or stimulate my desires. I am like a solitary being amidst routs and assemblies, and it seems as if my existence was a burthen. My bad state of health may make this impression on my mind. I try to overcome this sadness, which I'm afraid will become habitual; but if I strive against nature to be cheerful, I soon relapse into my former torpor."

"You must not indulge this disposition. Go to Bath, or to Spa. There you'll find some new objects to recreate and entertain you."

"I have tried all that, to no purpose; and I have found no more relief in public diversions than in the prescriptions of my physicians. But we all of us labor against our own cure, for death is the cure of all diseases." [11]

Like Gibbon, Clive viewed London as "crowds without company and dissipation without pleasure." Nor was pleasure to be found in the country, where mental and physical torture still enslaved body and soul. But his appearance in London, though not dynamic as hitherto, yet had the desired effect of humbling his critics; for he radiated "the ruling spirit of all things": *independence*.

One evening, Clive spoke in earnest to Dr. Ingham: "Pliny says there are but three sorts of diseases to escape which a man has good title to destroy himself, the worst of which is the stone in the bladder. Aye, the opinions of the ancients concur in this: that 'tis high time to die when there is more ill than good in living, and that to preserve life to our own torment and inconvenience is contrary to the very rules of nature."

"Pray watch him carefully, m'Lady," Ingham whispered to Lady Clive as he was about to leave. "M'Lord just conveyed to me that 'tis

[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Caraccioli.

better to die than to live miserable, and in such a manner as to convince me of his gravity." [12]

November 21. He suffered excruciatingly throughout the afternoon and night, and was driven to seek relief in stronger doses of laudanum. Friends came to call, to have a hand at whist. His extreme agitation was disturbingly apparent at the card table, where he could not concentrate and blurted such things as "I am pain personified!" [13] Haunted by insomnia, he sat up all night (his drugs within reach) to contemplate the desolating unendurable future.

November 22, 1774. Clive's gaunt, cadaverous face was etched with pain: pain that gnawed through the numbness like a rodent devouring his bowels. His valet had heard him breathing heavily all night, in agony. Mr. and Mrs. Strachey arrived at noon to accompany the Clives to Bath. Clive, still in his dressing gown, retired to his private chamber: presumably to dress. He had been roaming aimlessly through the house all morning, opening drawers and sifting through papers, his brow furrowed and his mind troubled. He stalked about the room for almost an hour, like a caged animal dazed and wild-eyed with hunger and desperation.

> *Diseases desperate grown,*
> *By desperate appliances are reliev'd,*
> *Or not at all. . . .*

Again he pondered the question: *To be, or not to be.* But now he no longer feared the eternal sleep, no longer felt that dread of something after death; no more cared what dreams may come, no more scorned that undiscovered bourn from which no traveler returns. . . . *To die, to sleep*—a dreamless, painless sleep—without want, without regret. Robert Clive swallowed all of the opium; and thus, in the forty-ninth year of his life, he challenged destiny for the last time.

Three P.M. Henry Strachey forced the door. He and Lady Clive rushed in. There was a scream, a call for the doctor. Strachey bent over the body, which lay on the thickly carpeted floor. "God have mercy on him. His Lordship wants now an undertaker, not a physician." [14]

[12] *Ingham Journal.*
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] *Ibid.*

There was no coroner's inquest, no mortician's attendance when the corpse was placed in a coffin. Clive's body was secretly buried the following night in the churchyard at Moreton Say, Shropshire, the parish in which he had been baptized. Nothing, not even a cross, marked the suicide's grave. *No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.* A brass inscription inside the door of the old church reads: *Sacred to the Memory of Robert Lord Clive, K.B. . . . Primus in India* [First in India].

Newspaper obituaries at first attributed the cause of death to a fit of apoplexy, occasioned by an accidental overdose of drugs; but the secret nature of his burial suggested suicide, which gave rise to wild tales that soon found their way into print. "Lord Clive has died every Death in ye Parish Register," Horace Walpole penned to Sir Horace Mann. "At present, it is fashionable to believe he cut his Throat."

"The Baboons will say of me," Clive had written to Pigot, "that I died under the crushing Burthen of mine own Iniquity; that my Sins were too great for me to bear. May they find Comfort & Satisfaction in this Pharisaick Sneer!"[15] True to Clive's prediction, Samuel Johnson popularized the scandal that "Lord Clive acquired his fortune by such crimes, that his consciousness of them impelled him to cut his own throat."[16] Dr. William Robertson, however, was more charitable: "Nay, sir, he cut his throat because he was weary of still life: little things not being sufficient to move his great mind."[17] Mr. Robert Pardoe, one of Clive's lawyers, officially settled the matter once and for all: "He had taken Opium for many Years; and finding the Disorder in his Bowells very painfull, he took a double Dose against Advice and died in a Fit."[18]

It is difficult to determine exactly what Clive was worth. He himself did not know for certain, nor were his attorneys sure of anything other than the fact that he was Britain's wealthiest citizen. Clive's credit was good for well over a million—perhaps a million and a half —and his known income approximated £50,000 a year. According to his last will and testament, Clive left his eldest son £40,000 a year in landed estates, plus the profits arising from his *jágír;* £20,000 a year

[15] *Pigot Papers.*
[16] Boswell.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *Strachey Papers; Ingham Journal.*

to his wife; £20,000 to each of his three daughters; £30,000 apiece to two other sons; and considerable legacies (totaling over £30,000) to several of his friends, family, and dependents.

Lord Macaulay portrays Clive of India as

> *a savage old nabob with an immense fortune, a tawny complexion, a bad liver, and a worse heart. . . . Clive, like most men who are born with strong passions and tried by strong temptations, committed great faults; but our island has scarcely ever produced a man more truly great either in arms or in council. . . . In the awful close of so much prosperity and glory, the vulgar saw only a confirmation of their own prejudices; and some men of real piety and genius so far forgot the maxims both of religion and philosophy as confidently to ascribe the mournful event to the just vengeance of God, and to the horrors of an evil conscience. It is with very different feelings that we contemplate the spectacle of a great mind ruined by the weariness of satiety, by the pangs of wounded honour, by fatal diseases and more fatal remedies.*[19]

"He was one of the strongest-minded men that ever lived," said Dr. Robertson. . . . "Yet this man cut his own throat!" Dr. Johnson retorted.[20] Charles Caraccioli, Clive's first biographer (1775), wrote of him: "He was perfectly acquainted with the Genius of the Asiaticks, and nobody knew better how to take advantage of their Apprehensions and Pusillanimity." Having acquired "a thorough Knowledge of the Manners, Laws, Customs, and Religions of the Gentoos and the Mahometan Usurpers, their Oppressors," and "having observed with the minutest Attention the radical Vices of their Government, the weak Proofs of their Power, and the Advantages of the European Military Discipline in overturning this Superstructure," he might have made himself "an independent Sovereign of part of the rich Peninsula of India, assisted by the Mogull and the Nabobs, who had conceived the highest Opinion of His Lordship's Abilities and were restored by his Authority to their respective Dominions. This is an instance of His Lordship's Moderation, which does not seem so consistent with his ambitious Views." Thomas Paine, in his *Reflections on the Life and Death of Lord Clive*, was less appreciative: "As an emblem of the

[19] *Essays* (Clive).
[20] Boswell.

Vanity of all earthly Pomp, let his monument be a Globe: but be that globe a Bubble; let his effigy be a man walking round it in his sleep; and let Fame and the character of a Shadow inscribe honors on the air."

Sir John Malcolm appraised Clive in this manner:

> *No man was ever more violently assailed and calumniated by his contemporaries. When events over which he had no control disappointed those hopes which his successes had raised, his opponents took advantage of the change in the public mind to reproach him with results which were chiefly to be attributed to their own factions and mismanagement. The prejudices excited by their efforts have been continued by orators and authors who, treating Indian subjects without reference to those local circumstances and considerations which peculiarly embarrass them, have pleased and satisfied general and uninformed men by reducing the most complex points of policy to an easy abstract question. . . . According to such self-constituted judges, the claim of Lord Clive to the admiration of posterity is very equivocal.*

Should mankind remember him as a conquistador, a dictator, a plunderer, an imperialist? Or as Bolingbroke said of Marlborough: "He was so great a man that I have forgotten his faults."

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* *

INDEX

Adams, Major Thomas, 278
Adventures of Roderick Random, 300
Afghanistan, 29, 169, 249, 252
Afghanistan, King of, 66
Afghans, 170, 171, 175–177, 187, 188
Ahmed Sháh (Ahmed Khán Abdálí), 66, 169, 171, 176, 188, 249, 250, 282
Aix la Chapelle, Treaty of, 88
Akbar the Great (Jeláluddín Muhammed), 3, 28, 29, 40
Albuquerque, 4
'Alemgír, Emperor, 135, 169, 249; Grand Mughal, 236
'Alemí, Abul-Fazl, 3*n*
Alexander, 28
'Alí Gawher Mu'azzem Khán Behádur, 249–253; Sháh 'Álem, 283, 284
'Alí Khán, Mír Ghulám, Serv-i-Ázád, notes, 73, 96, 99, 107
'Alínagar, 138
'Alíverdí Khán, 65, 130, 132, 133, 142, 186, 188, 213, 221, 258
Alláhábád, 249, 282, 287, 288
Ámíchand Mahájan (Omychund), 134, 136, 137, 138, 142, 157, 164–166, 170, 171, 173, 174, 177, 179, 180, 183, 184, 186–197, 224–226, 314, 316
Amíneh Bégam, 220
Angrézí, 128
Angria Tulagee, notes, 124, 125, 126, 127; quoted 127
Anveruddín Khán Behádur, 33, 34, 36, 37, 51, 52, 68, 69, 71, 108
aqua solis, 268
Arcot, 33, 51, 67–69, 73, 81–91, 98, 101, 107, 116, 199
Arcot, emirs of, 96
Aristippus, 47
Armada, Spanish, 4
Asef Jáh (Chin Killich Khán Asef Jáh Nizámul-Mulk), 37, 66–68, 73
Atahualpa, 222
Augusta of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Princess, 268
'Aurangzeyb, Emperor, 19, 28, 29, 40, 73, 90, 128
Ausonius, 97
Austrian Succession, War of, 5, 32, 58
d'Auteuil, Col. Combault, 69, 98–99, 102–103, 108
autoerotism, 207, 244

Bacon, 318
Bálájí Ráo Péshvá, 68
Ballykilty, 264
Baphomet, 301
Barebones Parliament, 7
Baré Jangí-Lát Sáhib Behádur, 221
Baroda, 291
Barrington, Lord, 116, 162
Bastille, 38
Bath, 268, 298, 330, 331
Bayley, Daniel and Elizabeth, 7–8, 22, 49, 51, 78
Becher, Richard, 132, 239
Behádur Sháh, 29
Belchier, William, 229
Bellamy, George-Anne, 299, 306
Benares, 288
Bengal, 16, 19, 75, 108, 127, 131–135, 137, 141, 144–147, 153, 154, 156, 157, 159, 162, 163, 166, 167, 174, 175–180, 186, 188, 189, 199, 202, 206, 215, 216, 221, 223, 231,

234–236, 242, 245, 247–251, 254, 255, 257, 260, 265, 267, 270, 271, 273–276, 279, 282, 284, 286, 299, 305, 309, 323
Bengal (Fort William) MS Records, notes, 16, 129, 235, 236, 260, 264, 270, 275
Bengal, Bay of, 33, 64
Betúteh, Ibn, 24, 33
Bhagirathi River, 201, 204, 206, 209
Bhaktí Movement, 28, 30
Bill of Rights, 1689, 4
"Billy the Butcher," 117
Bisdom, Mijnheer Alfred, 255
Black Hole of Calcutta, 139–142, 193, 226, 257, 278
Black Masses, 266
Blackstone, Sir William, 298
Black Town, 12–14
Bolingbroke, 334
Bombay, 11, 40, 124, 170, 246
Bombay MS Records, notes, 40, 124
Bonnie Prince Charlie, 239
Boscawen, Admiral Edward, 54
Boswell, James, *Life of Johnson*, notes, 117–119, 268, 269, 305, 308, 332, 333; 305
Bourchier, Richard, 124
Braddock, General, 233
Brahman, 29, 30, 40, 128, 134–136, 147, 157, 192, 225
Brereton, Captain, 194
Brest, 163
Britannica, 300
Budge-Budge, 148, 149
Burgoyne, Colonel John, 312–324
Burke, Edmund, 59, 241, 272, 289, 306, 310
Burke, Edmund, *Papers*, notes, 272, 297
Bussy-Castelnau (Patissier, Colonel Charles-Jean, Comte de), 73, 166, 177, 178, 240, 241, 261, 299
Bute, Lord (John Stuart, 3d Earl of), 268, 270, 306
Byng, Admiral, 233, 261

Calcutta, 11, 16, 64–65, 75, 108, 128–130, 134–136, 141, 144, 145, 149, 153–155, 161, 163, 168–171, 174–176, 183, 185, 190, 191, 194, 196–198, 201, 205, 209, 216, 217, 226, 234, 254, 259–261, 266, 271–278, 285, 287, 292, 293, 295, 298, 316
Campbell, Alexander, 143, 189
cancer of penis, 18
Canning, Lancelot, 19
Caraccioli, Charles, *Life of Lord Clive*, notes, 26, 45, 100, 242, 267, 292, 294, 295, 299, 308, 316, 325, 330; 20, 268, 298, 299, 300, 333
Carnac, Major Jack (Colonel), 270, 296, 304, 325
Carnatic, the, 33, 39, 45, 51, 66–71, 79, 83, 107–109, 111, 130, 241, 242
Caroline, Queen, 118
castration, 110, 111, 127, 136, 142, 143, 169, 175, 180, 278, 316
catamite, 93, 127, 181, 227–228, 260, 286, 291–292
Catherine the Great, 239
Catullus, 295
Cauvery River, 78, 79, 101, 102
Chandá Sáhib (Husayn Dóst Khán), 66–74, 76, 77, 79–81, 85, 88, 107, 108, 241
Chandernagore, 134, 140, 145, 146, 156, 164–178, 199, 205, 314
Charles I, 300
Charles II, 116–117, 307
Charles V, 328
Charnock, Job, 128, 129
Chatham, Lord, 302, 317, 322, 324; *see also* Pitt, William
Chatham Papers, notes, 240, 247, 302, 322
Chatterji, Tapanmohan, 260
Chesterfield, Lord, 119
Child, Sir Josiah, 19
Chingleput, 39, 41, 108–111, 316
Chingleput gatekeeper, 110–111, 315–316
Chinsurah, 140, 175, 234, 255
Chudleigh, Elizabeth, Duchess of Kingston, 118
Churayl, 32
Churchill, Charles, 266
circumcision, 8, 16–21, 18, 19, 20, 28, 39–42, 46–47, 77, 109, 113, 136, 140, 142, 161, 166, 170, 179, 182–183, 184, 186, 207, 236, 238, 249, 257, 267, 277, 291, 304
City of Palaces, 128
Clairon, Mlle, 299
Clarke, Captain, 79

Clipcock, 106, 152, 184, 267
Clipcock Club, 78
clipcocks, 40
Clive, George, 22, 228, 283, 299
Clive, Kitty, 299
Clive, Lady, *see* Margaret Maskelyne
Clive, Rebecca Gaskell, 7, 228–229
Clive, Richard, 7, 9, 22, 115, 116, 145–146, 162, 188, 228–229, 234, 244–245, 290
Clive, Robert, childhood, 6–9; illness, 8; phimosis, circumcision, 16–21 *and see entries;* satyriasis, 20 *and see entry;* homesickness, 21–26; whoring, 20, 26, 47; fever, 22, 64, 114, 148, 238; opium, *see entry;* attempted suicide, 25; languages, 26; fellatio, *see entry;* masturbation, *see entry;* venereal disease, *see entry;* fighting French, 66–114; supplies to Trichinopoly, 76–82; siege of Arcot, 82–87; food scarcity, 89; Kaveripak, 98, 99; brigade major, 100; anonymous attacks, 100; Trichinopoly, 99–108; Chingleput and Covelong, 108–111; marriage, 111–114; epileptoid convulsions, 114; in London, 115–122; lieutenant colonel, 122; governor Ft. St. David, deputy governor Madras, 122; against pirates, 122–127; commander-in-chief, Bengal expedition, 144–175; governor general, 162, 163, 236–237; the conspiracy, 190–197; the two treaties, 192–193; eve of Plassey, 198–208; Plassey, 209–217; master of Bengal, 221–223; the spoils, 224–229; gifts to Clive, 222, approved in London, 227; gifts returned, 222–223; Clive gifts to family, 228; ambitions, 229; women and, 222, 238, 239, 243–244, 295–296; vice-president Calcutta Council, 236; annexation suggested to Pitt, 246–247; and Sulivan, 248–260; gift to Prince of India, 252–253; rent-free land grant (jágír), 253–254; titles, 253; defeat of Dutch, 255–257; illness, 263; peerage, 264; Baron of Plassey, 264; Commander of the Bath, 264; Gainsborough portrait, 264; attempt of East India Company to confiscate jágír, 265, 266, 269–271, 298; M. P., Whig or liberal, 268; suit against Company, 270–271; third trip to India, 281–297; Sulivan forced out, 279–281; heritage from Mír Ja'far, 282; annexation, 283–284; purchase of E. I. C. stock, 283; further bribetaking, 284–285; whispering and smear campaign against, 295; illness, 296; major general Royal Army, 298; statue, honors, travels, 298–300, 302; attacks on, 302–309; Parliamentary inquiry, 312–327; Knight of the Bath, 317; Lord Lieutenant, Shropshire, 318; of Montgomeryshire, 318; money, 320; home, 325; illness, 329; gallstones, 329–331; death, 331; burial, 332; will, 332–333
Clive, Robert, *Essays*, notes, 273, 326, 333
Clive, Robert, *Fieldbook*, notes, 76, 102, 103, 158
Clive, Robert, *Papers*, notes, 8, 9, 16, 51, 52, 53, 78, 106, 112, 113, 115, 116, 131, 146, 153, 157, 162, 163, 188, 222, 226, 228, 229, 231, 234, 247, 254, 255, 257, 261, 262, 271, 280, 283, 290, 296, 298, 302, 305, 318, 323, 328
Clive, Sarah, 262
Clive, William, 307
coffee, 5
coins, copper, first minted, 27
Colbert, Jean-Baptiste, 27
Coleroon River, 59, 77, 79, 102, 103
Columbus, 4
Committee of Inquiry, Parliament, 313–328
Comorind, Cape, 262
Compagnie des Indes Orientales, 69, 73, 122, 123, 165; *see also* French East India Company
concubines, 48
Condom, Colonel, 307
Conflans, Comte de (Hubert de Brienne), 240–242
Conjeeveram, 83, 98
Conti, Prince de, 301
Cooke, John, 194

Coote, Eyre (Captain, Major, Colonel), 149–151, 153, 175, 199, 202–204, 211, 213, 214, 229–231, 242, 243, 248, 261, 265, 266, 276, 304
Coote, Eyre, *Journal*, note, 204
Coote, Eyre, *Journal of the Expedition to Bengall*, notes, 203, 205, 210, 211, 213, 214
Cope, Captain, 75, 76, 78, 80, 99
copulation, promiscuous, 266
Coromandel, 10, 11, 51, 54, 58, 64, 65, 73, 141, 178
corruption in London, 118–121
Cortes and Pizarro, 188, 222–224, 328
Cossimbazar, 156, 165, 177–180, 195, 257, 275, 277
Covelong, 108–111
Cowper, William, 257
cowhage, cow itch, 43
Cromwell, 7
Cuddalore, 77
cults of India, 3
Cumberland, Duke of, 117
Cutva, 201, 203, 206

Dacca, 132, 133, 277
Dalton, John (Lieut., Captain), 47, 55, 62–63, 80, 106–108, 111–113, 115
Dalton, John, *Diary*, note, 56
Dalton, John, *Journal*, notes, 20, 21, 47, 51, 56, 60–64, 70, 74–77, 99
Danish, 64, 137, 140, 144
Dánsháh, 218
Dashwood, Sir Francis (15th Baron le Despencer), 266, 267
dastak, 129
Da'úd Khán, Mír, 218, 227
Davies, A. M., *Clive of Plassey*, note, 6
Deccan, 69, 70, 74, 108, 114, 131, 134, 166, 178, 198
Deccani Nizám, the, 52
defecation practices, 133–134
Delhi, 19, 28, 29, 66, 133, 135, 140, 169, 174, 249, 252, 277, 282, 291
Devikota, 59, 60, 61, 63, 69, 79, 106, 240
dictator, French, of Deccan, 73
disease, venereal, 179, 308
divorce, 259
Dost 'Alí Khán, 66–68
Douglas, William (3d Earl of March, 4th Duke of Queensbury), 266, 267
dowries and annuities, 228
Drake, Roger, 134, 135, 137, 143, 153–155, 161, 163, 167, 168, 224, 230, 235, 236, 238
drinks, alcoholic and aphrodisiac, 47
Drury Lane Theatre, 116
Dual System, 287
Du Barry, Madame, 31
Dubois, J. A., 42
Dubois, J. A., *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, notes, 12, 42, 118
Dumas, Gov. Benoît, 67
Dupleix, Madame Jeanne, 31–33, 53, 56, 57, 69, 97, 99, 106, 122–123; *see also* Ján Bégam
Dupleix, Marie-Rose, 53
Dupleix, Marquis Joseph-François, 31–38, 44, 45, 52–58, 59–61, 64–65, 67, 69–72, 95, 97–99, 101–103, 106–108, 116, 122–123, 156, 172, 196, 262, 299, 328; Grand Vizier of South India, 73; *see also* Messire Duplicity
Dúpléks-Fatehábád, 74, 99
Dutch, 4–6, 11, 64, 137, 140, 144, 175, 234–236, 255–258
duties, customs, 129

East India Company, 5, 6, 10, 11, 14, 19, 20, 24, 27, 34, 40, 45, 53, 61, 63, 74, 83, 99, 108, 114–116, 119, 122, 123, 128, 129, 144, 154, 157, 162, 163, 168, 169, 175, 177, 185, 188, 192, 194, 198, 199, 201, 205, 206, 217, 224, 226–228, 231, 232, 234, 236, 237, 240, 242, 244–248, 250, 254, 257, 260, 261, 264, 265, 269–271, 272–277, 279–282, 284–286, 293, 297–298, 302–303, 310–325, 329; *see also* John Company
East India Company Court Minutes, notes, 279, 280
East India Company Records, notes, 10, 123, 129, 145, 156, 160, 227, 247, 248, 254, 257, 260, 280, 281, 284, 290
Eckman, Peter, 34
Edwardes, Allen, *Jewel in the Lotus*, note, 161
Elliott, Lieut., 136
Ellis, William, 277, 278
Emperor of Delhi, 289
England, Elizabethan, 4

English, the, 134, 136, 140, 202; Sirajuddawleh versus, 134, 176–177, 206
Errotika Biblion, 301
d'Estrées, Duc, 299

famine, Bengal, 309–311
fellatio, 46, 47, 103, 207, 238, 244, 267, 292, 295, 300, 301
female rapists, 110
Ferrukhsiyer, 29, 129, 134, 147, 158
feuds, blood, in Afghanistan, 252
fish, the gold, 236
Fletcher, Col. Sir Robert, 328
Floyer, Gov. Charles, 64, 70, 74
food shortage, Clive and men, 89
Forde, Lieut. Col. Francis, 240–242, 248, 252, 255, 256, 305
Fordyce, Rev. Mr. Francis, 61–63
Forrest, G. W., *Life of Lord Clive*, note, 59
Fort d'Orleans, 173, 175
Fort Duquesne, 233
Fort Ontario, 233
Fort St. David, 45–68, 59–61, 62–63, 70, 71, 75, 77, 80–82, 96, 97, 99, 105, 112, 113, 115, 127, 144, 240
Fort St. David MS Records, notes, 52, 54, 59, 62, 63, 70, 82, 89, 91, 99, 109, 111, 114, 115
Fort St. George, 10, 11, 16, 17, 19, 33, 34, 81, 83, 88, 108, 113, 143, 146, 154, 163, 242, 244, 283, 305
Fort St. George MS Records, notes, 142, 144, 155, 244
Fort William, 64–65, 134, 136, 137, 139, 149, 150–152, 155, 158, 159, 163, 168, 170, 185, 215, 227, 228, 240, 247, 275, 292, 297
Fort William MS Records, notes, 155, 167–170, 172, 185, 186, 192, 201, 205, 215, 218, 219, 223–225, 227, 274, 275
Foundling Hospital, 226
Fox, Charles James, 322
Fox, Henry, Baron Holland, 116, 121, 162
Francis, Sir Philip, 308
Franklin, Benjamin, 303
Frederick the Great, 262
French, the, 5, 11, 27, 29–38, 45, 51–59, 61, 67–75, 87, 99–111, 122–123, 131, 134, 135, 137, 140, 144–179, 185, 202, 209–217, 230–231, 234, 239–248, 261, 262, 299
French East India Company, 27, 37, 116; *see also* Compagnie des Indes Orientales
Friar Tuck, 267
Froggery, the, 44
Fulta, 147, 148, 257

Gaebele, Y., *Vie de Johanna Begum*, note, 32
Gainsborough, Thomas, 264, 325
gallstones, 329–331
da Gama, Vasco, 4
Ganges Delta, River, 128, 147, 262, 277, 288
Garrick, David, 116, 117, 299
Genghis Khan, 28
Gentoos, 12, 48, 88, 110, 288; *see also* Hindus
George II, 262
George III, 233, 263, 264, 268, 297–298, 317, 318, 327–328
germ warfare, Burgoyne's proposed, 313
Ghasíta Bégam, 133, 135, 219
Gházíyuddín Khán, Mír, 67, 68
Gheriah, 123–127
Ghulám Husayn Khán, *see* Husayn Khán
Ghulám Qádir Khán, *see* Qádir Khán
Gingens, Captain Johann Rudolf, 75–81, 99, 106
Gleig, G. R., *Life of Clive*, notes, 8, 9, 24, 25, 51, 56
Godeheu, Charles-Robert, 122, 123, 177
Gopal, Ram, *How the British Occupied Bengal*, note, 141
Grammatica Indostana, 26
Grand Mughal, Great Mughal, Grand Mogul, 3, 27–28, 33, 36, 39, 40, 58, 135, 236, 245, 246, 249, 252–254; *see also* Moghul Empire
Grenville, George, 293, 298, 299, 306
Grenville, George, *Papers*, notes, 293, 298, 299
Guerrin, Eugène, *Dupleix d'après des documents inédits*, note, 102
Guimard, Marie-Madeleine, 299
Gupta, Brijen K., *Sirajuddaulah and the East India Company*, note, 141

Hámid, R. T., 67–68, 122–123
Hámid, R. T., *Teváríkh*, notes, 32, 36, 37, 44, 51–53, 67, 68, 70, 72, 73, 84, 86, 88–91, 94, 96, 99, 106, 107, 110
Hamilton, Dr. William, 129
Handel, George Frederick, 118
Hardwicke, Earl of, 116, 162
Harness, W., *Clive*, note, 9
Hasen, Burhán, 92; *Tuzúk-i-Válájáhí*, notes, 96, 99, 288
Hasen Qúlí Khán, 133, 219, 220
Hastings, Warren, 28, 29, 250, 254, 257–261, 271, 276–279, 304, 305, 311, 313
Hastings Papers, notes, 28, 30, 193, 258, 259, 276, 277, 305, 306, 326
Hawkins, William, *Journal*, note, 19
Házrímall, 137
heads on Temple Bar, 321–322
Hell-Fire Club, 266, 267, 304, 306
Herring, Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, 119, 162
Hickey, William, *Journal*, notes, 7, 10, 65
Hinde, John, 49, 51–53, 64
Hindus, 3, 18, 27–29, 39, 40, 147, 160, 184, 197, 218, 220, 235, 251, 259, 275, 276, 278, 288, 311; *see also* Gentoos
Hindustani, 257
History of the Military Transactions . . ., writing of, 229
Hogarth, 121
Holderness, Lord, 116
Holland, Lord, 269–270, 322
Holwell, Dr. John Zephaniah, 137–142, 237, 250, 258, 260, 261, 264, 272, 275
Holwell, J. Z., *The Black Hole*, note, 140
Holwell, J. Z., *Historical Events*, notes, 134, 137
Holwell, J. Z., *India Tracts*, notes, 272, 273, 275
homosexualism, 48, 182, 184, 244, 266–267, 304
Hooghly (town), 155, 156
Hooghly River, 128, 147, 165, 170, 172, 227, 255, 256, 258, 261, 309
Hornby, William, 11, 14, 23
House of Heart's Delight, 207
Howard, John, 141
Husayn Dóst Khán, *see* Chandá Sáhib
Husayn Khán, Saiyed Ghulám, 92, 132, 137, 160, 161, 219–221, 250, 252, 261, 289
Husayn Khán, Saiyed Ghulám, *Siyer-i-Mut'ákharín*, notes, 65, 133–135, 138–142, 157, 160, 166, 175, 176, 186, 196, 199, 213, 219–221, 223, 252–254, 289
Hyderabad, 69, 73, 166, 177
Hyderabad, Nizám of, 242

Industrial Revolution, 216
Ingham, Dr. Samuel, 294–296, 299, 300, 303, 330–331
Ingham, Dr. Samuel, *Journal*, notes, 295, 296, 303, 311, 329, 331, 332
Intrigues of a Nabob, 229, 304; notes, 119, 232, 242, 254, 267, 295, 296, 301, 303, 305, 307, 308, 316
Islam, decline of, 29
Ives, Dr. Edward, 154–155, 194, 238, 239
Ives, Dr. Edward, *Journal*, notes, 142, 147–149, 167–170, 177, 184, 189, 193, 196
Ives, Dr. Edward, *Journal of the Expedition to Bengall*, notes, 150, 152, 155, 171, 203, 209

Ja'fer 'Alí Khán Behádur, Mír (Meer Jaffer), 185–192, 194–202, 204–206, 209–211, 213, 215, 217, 219, 221–227, 234–236, 245, 246, 249–253, 255, 256, 258–261, 267, 270, 271, 273, 274, 277, 282, 316, 320, 327; exiled, 272
Jagannáth Singh, 138
Jagat Séth (Juggut Seith), 180, 186, 187, 189, 206, 234–236, 250, 253, 277–278, 283, 286
jágír (jagheer), 253, 265, 269, 270, 298, 314, 315, 318, 332
James I, 300
Ján Bégam, 32, 53, 58–59, 72, 73, 122; *see also* Madame Dupleix
Jats, 28
Jehán, Sháh (Emperor), 18, 40, 128
Jehándar Sháh, 29
Jehángír, Emperor, 6, 18, 19, 28, 40
"Jemmy Twitcher," 120
Jennings, Captain William, 199, 203, 204, 211
jizyeh, 19, 39–41, 128

John Company (Ján Kampaní, Kampaní Behádur), 27, 31, 33, 51, 54, 59, 61, 66, 71, 76, 78, 81, 88, 98, 114, 123, 128, 133, 143, 153, 159, 198, 201, 202, 227, 234, 273; *see also* East India Company
Johnson, Samuel, 117, 118, 119, 263, 268, 269, 305, 306, 308, 312, 329, 332
Johnstone Brothers, 295, 296, 310
Johnstone, *Chrysal*, note, 267
Johnstone, John, 284, 285, 308, 317
Johnstone (Pulteney), William, 284, 302, 313, 321, 322
Journal of the Expedition to Bengall, 243
Journals of the House of Commons, notes, 312, 313, 317, 319, 322

Kalinga, Mohandás, 103
Kampení Jehán Behádur, 27; *see* John Company; East India Company
Kandahar, 36, 66, 169
Kánhají Angriyá, 124
Kaveripak, 98
Kent, H.M.S., 125, 150, 194
Kerem 'Alí Khán, 139, 218; *Muzaffernámeh*, notes, 132, 133, 135, 136, 138–142, 158, 175, 176, 183, 186, 196, 199–201, 205, 206, 208, 213, 217–219, 221, 223, 224, 236, 245, 252–254, 257, 282, 284, 289
Khelíl, 36, 37, 41, 44, 46–47
Kher-natseh, 181
Khudáyár Letíf Khán, Mír, 199, 206, 209, 215, 219; *see also* Letíf Khán
Khurrem Sháh Jehán, 28
Kidgell, Rev. John, 267, 300–301
Kilpatrick, James (Captain, Major), 91, 96, 155, 170, 199, 202–204, 209, 211, 214, 229, 231, 232
King, William Smith, 127, 164, 256
Kishandás Kumár, 134, 135, 137
Knight of the Bath, 317
Knights Templars, 301
knocking shop, the, 14, 147
Kóh-i-Núr, 28

La Bourdonnais, Comte de, 122; *Memoires*, notes, 34, 37, 57; *see also* Mahé, Admiral
Lákshabágh, 206, 216
Lally, Comte de (Thomas Arthur), 239–242, 248, 261; *Memoires*, notes, 261; *see also Lettres de M. Lally*
Lamb, Charles, 6
Lambádís (rapists, sodomists), 41–42
Latham, Captain, 226
laudanum, 92, 331
Law, Colonel-Chevalier Jacques-François, 76, 77, 79, 101–103, 107, 108, 122, 132
Law, Jacques-François, *Journal*, notes, 101, 106
Law, Capitaine Jean-Marie, 132, 137, 139, 177, 183–184, 195, 202, 230, 231
Law, Jean-Marie, *Journal Memoires*, notes, 133, 139, 148, 183
Law, John, 101
Lawrence, Major Stringer, 54, 55, 57–60, 62–64, 70, 71, 75, 82, 99–107, 115, 228, 241, 266
Lawrence, Stringer, *Journal*, notes, 101, 106
Letíf Khán, Mír Khudáyár, 186–188; *see also* Khudáyár
Lettres et conventions des gouverneurs de Pondichéry, note, 37
Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, 299; notes, 33, 34, 38, 44, 56, 106, 300, 301
Lettres de M. Lally, note, 241
Lexicon Persica, 26
Lloyd, Robert, 267
London, 116–122, 227, 242–243, 262–263, 268, 295, 297
London (Old) Company, 5, 18
Louis XV, 32, 328
Lucas, Captain, 55
Lucknow, 252
Lully, Jean-Baptiste, 301
Lushington, Henry, 193, 278, 314
Lutfunnisá, Bégam, 182, 184, 208, 218–219, 220, 258
Luxembourg, Duc de, 299

Macaulay, T. B., 141, 193, 273, 326; *Essays*, note, 193
Mad Monks of Medmenham Abbey, 266, 267, 300
Madan 'Alí Khán, Mír, 199, 209, 212, 215
Madras, 9–15, 18, 19, 22, 23, 25–27, 32–38, 45, 49, 51, 58, 59, 71, 82, 85, 96, 98, 111, 112, 114, 121, 143, 144, 154, 155, 162, 163, 168,

215, 237, 240, 241, 261, 265, 282, 292, 305
Madura, Maharajah of, 85
Magdalene Hospital, 226
Mahé, Admiral, Comte de La Bourdonnais, 33–35, 37, 38, 44; *see also* La Bourdonnais
Malabar Coast, 123, 125
malaria, 92–93
Malays, 255
Malcolm, Sir John, 334; *Life of Lord Clive*, notes, 8, 24
Malcolm's Anecdotes, notes, 7, 8, 115, 117, 118, 233, 245, 262, 263, 267, 268, 270, 303, 308, 317
Málik-i-Maydán, 91
Mánakchand, Rájá, 147–149
Mánakjí Sávant, 90, 91
Manningham, rotary governor, 237
Mansfield, Lord Chief Justice, 270, 317; *see also* William Murray
Maratha, 28, 40, 66–69, 90, 91, 102, 104, 105, 107, 123–127, 130, 131, 177, 251, 291
Maratha Empire, Western India, 66, 68
Marlborough, 334
Martial, 97
Martineau, Alfred, *Dupleix et l'Inde française*, notes, 31, 33, 56, 101, 122
Marx, Karl, 141, 188, 311
Mascarene Islands, 33, 178
Maskelyne, Edmund, 21–22, 25, 35–36, 39–40, 42–44, 64, 76–78, 108–111, 113, 116, 121, 162, 228, 296
Maskelyne, Margaret (Peggy, Mrs. Robert Clive, Lady Clive), 111–114, 142, 162, 177, 203, 215, 224, 229, 267, 268, 286, 290, 296, 298, 300
Maskelyne Papers, notes, 25, 26, 50, 105, 112, 113, 117, 121, 131, 142, 162, 170, 171, 174, 181, 183, 203, 215, 224, 228, 229, 279, 328
mast, 239
masturbation, 44, 46, 48, 131, 161, 179, 207, 208, 238, 243, 267, 296, 300, 301
Masulipatam, 241, 242
Maymún, 207
M'Guire, Select Committee, 260
Mehfúz 'Alí Khán, 51, 52, 69, 72–73
Mehmúd 'Alí, 132, 138
Mehtábrái, 278
Melcombe, Baron (George Bubb Doddington), 266, 267
mercantilism, rise of, 4
Messire Duplicity, 34, 64, 69, 98, 108; *see also* Marquis Dupleix
Midnapore, Rajah of, 235
Mill, James, 123, 141, 225, 274
Minchin, Commandant, 137
Minorca, 233
Mirabeau, Comte de, 301
Mirán Bég, 217, 219–221, 223, 227, 235, 246, 258, 267, 271
Mírzá Mehdi, 234–235
Mírzá 'Umer Bég, 191, 219, 220
Mírzá Mehmúd 'Alí Khán Behádur, 130
Mississippi Scheme (Law's Bubble), 101
Moghul Empire, annexation of, 283–284; *see also* Grand Mughal
money from prostitutes, 316
Montagu, John, *see* Sandwich, Earl of
Montcalm, 233
Montezuma, 222
Moreton Say, Shropshire, 332
Morse, Governor Nicholas, 23, 26, 32, 34, 35, 44, 45, 48, 53, 57, 59, 82, 91, 98, 109, 114, 115, 144
Moses, Levi, 36, 39, 41, 44, 115; *Daybook*, notes, 36, 44
Mu'ásir-i-'Umr, notes, 73, 84, 94, 96, 99, 107, 110
Mubárik Manzil, 222, 223
Muharrem, 92
Mughal, 60, 128–130, 169, 299
Mughal Army, 73
Mughal Empire, dissolution of, 27–30
Mughal Empire, 141
Mughal India in British Empire, 283–296
Muhammed Akber, 291–292
Muhammed 'Alí Khán, 51, 52, 68–71, 73–76, 78, 80, 96, 99, 107, 108, 110–112, 115, 241, 242
Muhammed Gházíyuddín Khán, 249
Muhammed Ibráhím, 29
Muhammed Rizá Khán, 286
Muhammed Se'íd, 68
Muhammed Sháh, 29, 36, 66, 169
Mukherjee, Ramkrishna, *Rise and Fall of the East India Company*, note, 141

Muncarra, 204
Munro, Major Hector, 282
Murádduddawleh, 135
Murád Khudádad, 207, 243, 292
Murárí Ráo, 67, 68, 90, 91, 112
Murray, Fanny, 307
Murray, William (Earl of Mansfield), 116, 121; *see also* Mansfield
Murshidabad, 140, 154, 160, 162, 170, 177, 178, 186–188, 195, 198–201, 213, 215, 217, 218, 220, 222, 223, 227, 231, 235, 250, 252, 254, 255, 257, 271, 275, 284, 292, 304, 315
Murtezá Alí Khán, 67, 68, 88, 94
Muslims, 3, 28, 39, 40, 48, 65, 66, 92–94, 96, 124, 135, 161, 183, 196, 243, 249, 250, 259, 278, 311
Muzaffer Jang, Nizám of the Deccan, 66, 68–73
Mysore, Maharajah of, 85

Nádir Sháh, 28, 29, 36, 68, 129–130, 166, 169
Najmuddawleh, 284–286, 295, 308
Nandkumár Rái, 165, 166, 170, 174, 176
narcotics, 47; *see also* opium; laudanum
Nash, Richard (Beau), 117, 268
Násir 'Alí, 135
Násir Jang, 66, 68–72
natives, practices and customs, 12–13, 14, 24–25, 41–44, 174, 184
Navarro, Abraham, 19
Nevább, 11
Nevázísh Muhammed Khán, 133
New (English) Company, 5, 18
Newcastle, Duke of (Thomas Pelham-Holles), 116, 121, 162, 233, 234, 264, 269
Neykúsiyer, 29
North, Lord, 317, 322, 328
North Briton, 307
Northern Sircars, 242
Norton, Fletcher, Solicitor General, 270

oath on genitals, 160, 161, 176, 196, 200, 289
O'Lally, Sir Gerald, 239
Old Cock, 54, 56, 99–101, 105, 107, 228
Old Q, 266
Onania, 208
onanism, 21, 44, 207, 209, 238
opium, 23, 44, 46, 64, 92, 114, 154, 238, 260, 294–296, 302, 331, 332
Orford, 2d Earl of (Tom Walpole), 266–267
Orme & Clive, Incorp., 75
Orme Journal, notes, 74, 75, 110, 133, 227, 247
Orme Papers, notes, 52, 53, 57, 58, 60, 64, 82, 85, 86, 88, 96, 103, 105, 106, 109, 111, 115, 116, 121, 127, 131, 132, 142, 145, 147, 150–152, 154, 155, 159, 160–165, 167, 172, 173, 176, 178, 180, 185, 187–198, 203, 210, 215, 216, 224–226, 228–232, 236, 240–242, 244–248, 252, 255, 256, 258–260, 264, 266, 269–276, 283–285, 287, 288, 291–293, 298, 303, 304, 310, 311, 316, 324
Orme, R., *Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, notes, 96, 107, 130, 132, 197, 225, 227
Orme, Robert, 107, 109–111, 130–132, 141, 196–197, 225, 227, 229, 264, 267–269, 275, 284, 290, 316, 329
Oswego, 233
Oudh, 235, 249, 252, 281

Paine, Thomas, 333–334
Palar River, 42, 83, 98
Paradis, Capitaine, 38, 51, 52, 57
Pardoe, Robert, 332
Parker, Hyde, 63
Parliamentary History of England, notes, 120, 234, 306, 310, 312, 319, 320, 322, 324–326
Parliamentary Papers, notes, 313, 327
Patna, 132, 169, 170, 187, 218, 276–279
Payne, John, 162, 193, 228, 232
Peacock Throne, 28
pederasty, paederasty, 48, 118, 300
Pédérastes, La Sainte Congrégation des Glorieux, 301
pedophilia, 48
Pelham, Henry, 32, 116
Penner River, 111
Persian Empire, 66
Persians, 258
perversion, 166
phimosis, 16–21, 182, 207, 243
Pigot, George, 78, 79, 96, 144–146, 149, 153–155, 163, 175, 177, 180,

237, 240, 241, 244, 248, 263, 264, 269, 271, 281–283, 325, 332
Pigot, G., *Letters*, notes, 82, 96, 144, 145
Pigot, G., *Papers*, notes, 78, 79, 149, 150, 153–155, 157, 175, 178, 180, 202, 234–237, 240, 241, 248, 263–265, 269, 280, 292, 332
Pillái, P. A., 67, 74, 107; *Brittánt*, notes, 32, 44, 58, 67, 72, 89, 96, 106, 107
Pitt, John, 19
Pitt, Captain Thomas, 19
Pitt, William, 116, 233, 234, 240, 245–247, 262, 268, 297, 306, 310; *see also* Lord Chatham
Pizarro, *see* Cortés
Plassey, 127, 177, 185, 197–201, 204, 206, 209–217, 233, 234, 242, 243, 291, 298, 315
pledge of honor, 160
Pliny, 330
plundering by British, 273–275
Pococke, Rear Admiral George, 226, 240, 241, 255, 256
pogglynautches, 180–181
Poligars, 78–79
Pompadour, Madame, 31, 239
Pondicherry, 27, 31–33, 35, 39–44, 52, 54–57, 69, 71, 73, 89, 106, 112, 122, 163, 164, 167, 169, 172, 175, 177, 178, 241, 242, 261
Portugal, 4–6
Potter, John, Archbishop of Canterbury, 267
Potter, Thomas, 121, 267, 300–301
Powis, Lord, 317
pox, the, 49
Pratáp Singh, 59, 61, 71, 107
Pulteney, *see* William Johnstone
punch, 47
Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, note, 19
purification, 157
Puritanism, 4
Purneah, 133, 135
Purneah, Rajah of, 235

Qádir Khán, Ghulám, 291
Qásim 'Alí Khán, Mír, 218, 227, 236, 272, 274–278, 280, 282
Quebec, 262
Quin, James, 306
quinine, 92, 154, 238
Qúlí, Khán, Mír Muhammed, 249, 252

Rae, Dr. John, 17–21, 24–26, 35–36, 39–45, 85, 92–93, 97, 104, 109–111, 161, 207–208
Rae, John, *Journal*, notes, 12, 13, 17, 20, 25, 27, 36, 39–43, 46, 47, 58, 61, 63, 65, 70, 74, 77, 78, 81, 83–88, 90, 91, 93, 94, 100, 102, 104, 105, 107, 109, 114
Rae, John, *Medical Recordbook*, notes, 17, 21, 64
Ráff'uddawleh, 29
Ráiballabh Singh, 133–135
Ráidulábh Rám, Rájá (Roydoolob), 174, 176, 177, 185, 187, 189, 190, 197, 199, 206, 213, 215, 234–236, 250, 259, 283, 286, 288
Rajmahal, 218, 230, 231
Rajputs, 28
Rámají Panth, 124–126
Rámnáráyan, Rájá, 235, 236, 276, 277
Renault, Pierre, 156, 163–165, 169, 172–175, 177; *Journal*, note, 173
rape, 277
rapists, female, 41–44, 110
Ray, Martha, 308
Reinhardt, Walther, 276–278, 282
Report from the Secret Committee on the State of East India Company, note, 194
Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, notes, 315, 316
Reynolds, Joshua, 118
Rizá Sáhib, 86–88, 90, 91, 94, 96–98, 108, 110, 241, 242
Robertson, Dr. William, 332, 333
Rockingham, Marquis of, 269
Roderick Random, 117
Roe, Sir Thomas, 5–6
Rouse, Charles Boughton, 269, 270, 281, 283–285, 287, 290

Sábit Jang Behádur, 99, 113, 115, 157, 159, 161, 170, 174, 182, 205, 223, 243, 245, 272, 282
sadism and torture, 67, 107, 127, 131–133, 135–140, 175, 181, 184, 220, 258, 278, 291
Safder 'Alí Khán, 67, 68
Sáhújí Ráo, 59, 61, 69, 71
St. David Council, 89
St. David Roads, 54
Saint-Frais, Capitaine de (Sinfray), 199, 209, 210, 212, 214

St. Michael in Cornwall, 121
Saiyed Ahmed Khán, 133
saltpeter concession, 236
Samrú, Bégam (Sumroo, Bíbí Chút), 282
Sandwich, Earl of (John Montagu), 119–121, 266, 267, 308
Saratoga, 313
Satanists, 266
Satara, 67
Satyriasis, 20, 47, 125, 208, 300
Saunders, Governor Thomas, 74, 77–79, 81, 82, 86, 89, 91, 96, 97, 99, 108, 109, 115
Sayfuddawleh, 286, 295
Schurig, *Spermatologia*, 16–17
Scrafton, Luke, 179, 187, 196, 224, 225, 227, 250, 258, 305
Scrafton, Luke, *Letters*, notes, 179, 181, 187, 196, 224, 225
Selábat Jang Behádur, 73, 108, 111, 166, 177, 242
Selímulláh Khán, Shaykh, *Taríkh-i-Bengál*, note, 129
Serampore, 140
Serferáz Khán, 130
Seringam, 103, 106
sex life, 12–14, 48–49, 131, 179, 181–184, 207, 218, 219, 220, 222, 230, 238, 239
Shah 'Álem, 287–291, 303
Sháisteh Khán, 19, 129
Shawkat Jang (Shawkut Jung), 133, 135, 238
Shehnáneváz Khvájeh, 72
Shelburne, Earl of, 269
Sheridan, Thomas, 306
Shipman, Sir Abraham, 40
Shiva, 27
Shivají, 28, 30, 40, 59, 90, 124
Shivají, sons of, 67
Shivanáth Rái (Sheevnautroy), 230
Shrewsbury, 268
Shrí Mohanlál, 208, 213, 218–220
Shujá'uddawleh Khán, 235, 249, 252, 279, 281, 282, 289–291
Siege & Defence of Arcott, notes, 84–87, 89, 95
Sikhs, 28
Sindhiyá, Madhají, 291
Sirájuddawleh, 65, 131–143, 146, 147 155–196, 198–202, 205–222, 226, 227, 234, 250, 251, 257, 258, 274, 278, 281, 282, 289, 314, 316, 320, 327
Smollett, Tobias, 117, 300
sodomy, 13, 42, 53, 62, 65, 68, 77, 111, 127, 140, 142, 143, 166, 180–184, 217, 219, 220, 238, 268, 277–278, 286, 295, 300, 301
Soubise, Prince de, 299
South India, 66, 67
Speke, Captain Henry, 150–152
sports, 294
Stavorinus, Jan, 243
Strachey, Henry, 265, 296, 329, 331; *Papers*, notes, 216, 265, 329, 330, 332
Strahan, Paddy, 149
Styche, 7
Sudra, 128
Sulivan, Laurence, 244–246, 248, 254, 264–266, 269, 270, 276, 279–281, 284, 285, 290, 295, 304, 307, 312, 313, 322
Sumner, William Brightwell, 260, 286
Sunderbunds, 221
Surat, 6, 40
Svárupchand, 278
Sykes, Francis, 195, 288, 304, 305
Sykes, Francis, *Journal*, notes, 181, 262, 279–280, 282, 283, 285, 297, 304, 305, 307, 324, 325

Taj Mahal, 3, 28
Tamerlane, 28, 141
Tanjore, 45, 59, 60, 67, 69, 74, 75; Rajah of, 86, 107
Táríkh-i-Mansúrí, 243, 289, 291; notes, 133, 135, 136, 138, 139–142, 146–148, 156–159, 161, 166, 170, 171, 174–178, 185, 190, 198–201, 204–206, 210, 212, 213, 217, 219, 221, 223, 230, 236, 249–254, 268, 272, 277, 278, 286, 289, 291
tea, 5
Terraneau, Lieut. Cossart de, 173
testicle thrust, 57–58
testifying on genitals, 160, 161, 176, 196, 200, 239
Thurlow, Lord, 322
Transactions in India from 1756 to 1783, notes, 129, 141, 273, 309
Treaty of Calcutta, 198
Trenwith, Lieut., 88
tribades, 41

Trichinopoly, 66–70, 76–82, 85, 87, 88, 96–98, 101, 102, 111, 112
Trully, Robert, 19
Tulájí Angriyá, 123–127

'Umer, 227

Vaishya, 128
Valconda, 76, 77, 106
Valdore, 71, 72
Vandivash, 261
Vansittart, Harry, 264–267, 271–274, 276, 277, 279, 281, 282, 284, 295, 296, 304, 305, 316
Vellore, 67, 95
venereal disease, 18, 49, 112, 117, 129, 239
Verelst, Henry, 274, 298, 305; *The English Government in Bengall*, notes, 274
Vijayadurga, 125, 126
Voltaire, 233, 240, 261, 309, 310, 328, 329
Voyages from England to India, note, 149
Voyages to the East Indies in 1747 and 1748, 243; notes, 11, 16, 19, 24, 25, 34, 35, 46, 51, 54, 56, 58, 59

Walpole, Horace, 233, 263, 298, 299, 303, 309, 312, 329, 332
Walpole, Horace, *Letters*, notes, 233, 263, 298, 303, 304, 307, 328
Walpole, Sir Richard, 119–120
Walsh, John (Jack), 36, 39, 40, 42–44, 53, 121, 243, 247
Warburton, Most Rev. Bishop William, 267
Watson, Admiral Charles, 124–126, 144–156, 158, 159, 167–169, 171–173, 176, 177, 180, 184, 187, 188, 192–194, 197, 198, 215, 226, 232, 276, 314, 316
Watson, Dr. John, Prebendary Westminster Abbey, 134
Watts, William, 65, 136, 143, 160, 161, 165–167, 170–173, 177–183, 185, 187–198, 219, 220, 225, 237, 238, 256–258, 260, 264, 314
Watts, William, *Journal*, notes, 65, 161, 164, 166, 177, 179–183, 190, 197, 256, 257, 259, 260, 267
Wedderburn, Alexander, 299, 306, 307, 311, 317, 318, 325–328, 330
Weldon, George, 19; *Journal*, note, 20
Wesleys, the, 18
Westminster Abbey, 232
Westminster College, 257
Whitehead, William, Poet Laureate, 266
whoring, 13, 24, 26, 47–49
Wilkes, John, 121, 266, 267, 306–308; *Papers*, notes, 267, 268
Wilks, Colonel Mark, 95; *Wilks MSS.*, 41; notes, 71, 78, 108, 170, 231, 277
William Augustus, 262
William III, 300
Wilmot, John, *Sodom*, note, 117
Wolfe, James, 58, 203, 262
Woffington, Peg, 299

Yale, Elihu, 19
Yorke, Charles, 270
Yule, Sir Henry, 243
Yúsuf 'Alí Khán, Saiyed, *Ahvál-i-Mehabbat Jang*, notes, 130, 131, 137

Záhiruddín Muhammed Baber, 28
Zaynuddín Ahmed Khán, 132
Zimri, 57

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